

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 11

"It takes 13 weeks to make a Marine."

We were at Gunny and Marilyn's just after the first of the year. The Quonset huts had been delivered and erected. Gunny and I had been talking about various things and when we finished for the day, we were on the subject of defending the farms. That discussion continued even to our sitting down to supper.

"What are you two talking about, our own trained Army?"

"More like a Platoon, that's what we have for equipment."

"How did you know it would come to this, Dan?" I asked.

"I didn't know, *per se*, but I read the papers and watched the news, June. A person could see this climate change coming from miles off. That's why I looked up Tom; I wanted the ability to protect my new wife and family. I figured we'd be better off if we had another experienced soldier and Tom and Elle were looking for a place to live. We can assign one rifle squad to each farm and have the weapons squad available for any of the farms."

"We'd be better off sending 1½ rifle squads and ½ of the weapons squad to Rachel's and your place, Dan," Gunny suggested. "We can position people to guard our flanks."

"I wish now that I'd gotten 2 M240s and 2 M2HBs. That would have better balanced the troops. The thought didn't occur to me at the time and with Tom retired, I don't know how to make that happen."

"I don't want to hear any more about fighting at the dinner table," Marilyn said crossly.

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Gunny and I had finished dinner and were sitting in his Den, where we resumed the conversation.

"I might be able to remedy your problem, Dan."

"What did you have in mind?"

"I know a guy who is staying to get his 30. We'd need one M240 and one M2HB to round out the weapons squad, right?"

"It would be more than a squad, but that would put 2 M240s and 1 M2HB on each of the two farms, yes."

"We don't really need them much before what, April?"

"I suppose not, if we can recruit about 60 people and you can get the weapons, we can train on the equipment we have."

"Recruit, hell, we're going to have to hire mercs."

"Yeah, right, we'll just put an ad in Soldier of Fortune Magazine."

"Twenty years ago, maybe, I had it in mind to hire a security force by placing ads on the internet. We could be very specific in our hiring, combat tested vets, probably Marines and Army. We could include a hiring bonus for people with a Special Forces background."

"How would we pay them? Hiring a bunch of mercs could be very expensive."

"Not if they have families they're desperate to feed. We could pay part in food and part in cash to allow them to buy what we can't provide."

"And house them where?"

"The guy you turned me onto with the Quonset huts said he had one barracks setup. Do you have room on the other side of your machine shed for another of the 48' Quonset huts?"

"There's room, but I'll have to ask June, it's her farm."

While Gunny's idea had some merit, it would mean we'd have to make big changes. If June and I housed a Platoon of security men, we'd have to feed them and ship food for maybe 60 families. She had a regular clinic set up in the basement and could probably handle routine injuries. If we got into a big fire, there was no way she could handle many people at once.

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"What did the 2 of you discuss after dinner?"

"Mercenaries."

"Right, just what we need, a bunch of guys who think they're Rambo."

"Think about it, it does make sense. First off, we'd only hire combat vets and they wouldn't require training. Gunny said he had a line on a barracks type Quonset hut and asked if we could put it in on the other side of the machine shed. I told him that I'd talk it over with you. We could pay them partly in food for their families and partly in cash. If you were ok with it, you could provide clinic services for any medical needs."

"And feed them how? You're talking anywhere from 52 to 60 people, here. There is no way I could be two places at once if fighting did break out."

"Then we'll have to hire a couple of combat medics or hospital corpsmen."

"A 48' hut will never work, it would only provide sleeping quarters, we'd need a warehouse set up for barracks, day room and cooking facilities. I can still get meds; Doc retired, but he'll write me scripts. Still, the clinic is only set up with 4 beds."

"Is that a yes or a no, June?"

"Maybe we could get Doc to come out of retirement. I suppose yes, Dan. Are you sure this is really necessary?" I asked.

I'd given one husband to the cause; I didn't want to give a second. Having a security force was a fulltime investment. On the other hand, it would get me out of the canning business and back into the medical business. Marilyn and Rachel would have to supervise gardening and food processing. There was only one of me and while I could use all of the equipment in the basement, a person can't be two places at once. The original idea was a single person requiring immediate attention, allowing me to either do the lab tests or take the X rays. That was why I suggested Doc Williams, he could do the doctoring and I could be his support. If they did hire a couple of military medical people, we could train them on the equipment we had and round out the medical staff.

All of the equipment was dated, but relatively modern, that is, circa 2005. It was more automatic than earlier equipment and a person just had to specify the particular test and set the equipment up. There was an automatic developer for X ray film, comparison slides if we got something we couldn't identify and so forth. Doc hadn't said anything when he retired, it was still his equipment. It just made good sense to ask him to help use it.

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"June, I just don't know, I retired because I'm getting old."

"That's what they call experienced, Doc. Look, we're putting in a security force because we'll be running a major truck farming operation this coming summer. There is a clear risk of people trying to take what we have. Even if Dan and Gunny hire a couple of medics, we're going to need a place to treat people until we can transport them to Lakin."

"How is your second marriage working out?"

"I got me a winner, Doc. He isn't a medic like Randy, but he is a very good soldier. He's had his loses, too, losing his wife to cancer. Dan is all man and yet, thoughtful and a little introspective. What can I say, the kids took to him after a bit and you know what

they've been through."

"I'll tell you what I will do, June. I'll come out and we'll go through your preparations. I'll decide what you may need to adjust and see that you're well stocked. I can schedule one day a week to be available to meet any needs and will remain on call, just in case."

"That would be perfect, Doc. Thank you. We've made a lot of changes over the past few years; you probably won't recognize our farm anymore."

"Mary and Julia are expecting aren't they?"

"No, Mary, Julia and Susan are expecting. Want to take over their prenatal care?"

"As long as I'm coming out there once a week, why not?"

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Doc did his little inspection, for lack of a better word, and added several additional IV solutions, IV antibiotics and so forth. We had all of the equipment serviced, hoping we wouldn't need to use it. We even verified the dates on the supplies in the Combat Life-saver's bags and they were good for another year. Gunny and Dan got the canning warehouse completed and in the meantime had the contractor install another warehouse on the other side of our machine shed. They went ahead and had him set it up to house, feed and entertain 60 security personnel.

They put Tom in charge of interviewing the prospective candidates. We laid in supplies of things we hadn't previously maintained, primarily, cigarettes. Tom hired two hospital corpsmen and 2 cooks who could fight. In addition, perhaps as many as 20 of the men were former Rangers, Special Forces, SEALs or Force Recon. Instant security force, all in place and ready to go by April 1st. Gunny got the missing machine guns, though they cost him an arm and a leg, metaphorically. The 4 squads were organized into 2 squads, each equipped with 4 M249s, 4 Grenadiers, 2 M240s, 1 M2HB, and one corpsman. Those two cooks were issued M4s and carried ammo for the .50 caliber machinegun.

The greenhouse was packed to the limit with plants for our use; the greenhouse in Lakin would have to supply the people who rented garden space from us. We each devoted 10 acres to that and had 30 acres on each farm devoted strictly to our planned truck farming operation. You didn't think we were going to cut off the people who we rented space to, did you? Most of them carried guns and that could come in handy if push came to shove.

One other commodity we couldn't grow was rice. Growing rice generally requires level ground and our ground wasn't quite level enough. Rather than investing money in grading a perfectly level spot, it was far easier to buy it by the ton, e.g., 20 100-pound sacks. June said that they had graded off a bit of topsoil after the war but trying to grade a level field wasn't an option.

The US produces over 40 commercial varieties of rice each year in paddy, brown, white, parboiled and precooked forms. There are thousands of rice varieties. At the International Rice Research Institute Genetic Resources Centre in the Philippines, there are 80,000 rice samples in cold storage. Rice is grown on every continent except Antarctica. One seed of rice yields more than 3,000 grains. It is the highest yielding cereal grain and can grow in many kinds of environment and soils.

Rice is often grown in paddies – shallow puddles carefully controlled to ensure the appropriate water depth (typically 15cm – 6"). Rice paddies sometimes serve a dual agricultural purpose by also producing edible fish or frogs, a useful source of protein. The farmers take advantage of the rice plant's tolerance to water: the water in the paddies prevents weeds from outgrowing the crop. Once the rice has established dominance of the field, the water can be drained in preparation for harvest. Paddies increase productivity, although rice can also be grown on dry land (including on terraced hillsides) with the help of chemical weed controls and adequate subsoil moisture. And, therein lay the rub, no chemicals.

Soybeans, corn and grass crops weren't a problem to grow and we needed all of the biodiesel we could produce this year. We might and might not have some to sell to the City and County. Hay supplies were running low by springtime and we needed that first cutting of alfalfa for the cattle. We still had a bit of timothy for the horses, but might have to feed it to the cattle. The space for the bigger gardens, you see, cut into our permanent pasture.

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The growing conditions were perfect. We had two years' worth of manure on the fields and just the right amount of subsurface moisture. If we didn't get rain, we had the ability to irrigate from those deep wells. Jason told me that this might be another of those 60 bushel years for soybeans. 600 acres at 60 per would yield 36,000 bushels and allow us to fill our tanks and sell a little biodiesel. The corn crop looked to go 150 bushels per acre, even better, giving us something to sell. Maybe this would be the year we produced 24 barrels of bourbon, or maybe not.

We didn't make our own barrels, we bought them. A whiskey barrel is a very distinctive item, something that could draw the attention of the ATF. Maybe they didn't have as big of fangs when it came to NFA weapons, but they more than made up for it trying to clamp down on the various moonshine operations that had sprung up after the war. What, you thought we were alone in this? Not by a long sight, the only difference between what other people produced and what we made was theirs wasn't aged, it was raw alcohol. Ours was aged to just the perfect taste and bottled in real bottles.

"Y'all have quite the security force, what's that for to protect your still?"

"What still Sheriff?"

"You make biodiesel and you've never purchased methanol. That must mean that you are producing anhydrous ethanol and that takes a still."

"It actually takes 2 stills, Sheriff, one to produce the ethanol and another to produce the anhydrous."

"There's an ATF guy in Lakin nosing around, you know."

"You know we sell our corn to the plant in Garden City."

"All of it?"

"We keep some to produce livestock feed, of course."

"Now you listen and listen good, Dan, not all County Mounties are like Sheriff Buford T. Justice." (Buford T. Justice was the name of a real Florida Highway Patrolman known to Burt Reynolds' father who was once Chief of Police of Jupiter, Florida.)

"What are you trying to say?"

"Be careful, that's some damn good drinking whiskey."

"The security people are to protect the gardens, Sheriff. Food has been a bit scarce as of late and we're afraid that someone might try to come in and take the food we're growing and processing for the people in Kearny County and Garden City. Care for a beer?"

"I'm on duty, but if you had a couple of bottles of Proprietor's Reserve that you bought somewhere, I might be bribed."

"Into doing what?"

"Developing a very bad memory."

"I wouldn't try to bribe you Sheriff, you're an honest man. But, as it happens, I did buy a case of the bourbon from a guy and I suppose I could spare a couple of bottles."

"The stuff from the very first year it appeared was very special."

"I believe that was the 2014 batch and I also believe that's what my case of bourbon is."

"And if I told you the 2015, that's what you would just happen to have a case of, right?"

"I understood that they bottled twice as much that year, I bought 2 cases of that. I try to buy one or two cases every year, although I can't really tell much difference year to year."

"Just don't get caught, it wouldn't look good for a Reserve Deputy to be caught moon-shining."

"Me?"

"If the shoe fits..."

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The Sheriff must be a liberal, what with being a Finney County Deputy at one time. We didn't have any particular shortage of the bourbon so I got him 2 bottles of the 2014, Randy's first batch. But I told him the truth; I couldn't taste any difference between the years. You may recall that the Proprietor's Reserve was a significant factor in June and I getting together originally. I guess you could say I married a bourbon heiress.

We plowed early and were ready to plant by May 1st, the winter ending rather abruptly. From the time we began planting, we deployed the security force. I planted as much of the garden as I could using the corn planter and various plates. The primary advantages were twofold, uniform planting and the ability to cultivate that portion of the garden with the tractor. I believe I mentioned, or perhaps June did, that this would be our first big year of using horses for most of the farming. I suppose we hired about 100 people for each farm to work the gardens and some of them would also be working in the processing hut. Rachel ended up supervising the garden workers and Marilyn the Processing workers.

We paid in various ways, some of the processed food, meat and a little silver to allow the employees to purchase what we didn't produce. They were hauled back and forth in the 4 old school buses from Leoti. I haven't mentioned Jacob and Maureen McLintock, Sam and Sarah Adams or Will and Patricia Bonnet, the folks from Leoti because we hadn't seen much of them. There was something about that one name, Will Bonnet that nagged at me, but for the life of me, I couldn't figure out what it was.

"Gunny, what is there about the name Will Bonnet that bothers me?"

"Will Sonnett was an ex-cavalry scout and gunfighter in a TV show back in the late 60s."

"Maybe that's it, but I'm not old enough to really remember it. Who was in it?"

"It starred Walter Brennan, Dack Rambo and Jason Evers."

"Can't say that I place the names."

"Brennan has been dead for a very long time, right after that series was on TV, Rambo died of AIDS in the early '90s and Evers maybe around 2005."

"That's strange, I don't recall ever hearing of the TV series, but the name sort of nagged."

"Nagging, huh? The hair on the back of my neck has been standing straight up since the planting got finished. You can wear your cowboy guns if you want, but from now on I'm going to be properly armed with a M1911 and a M1A."

"You know, Tom is pretty vulnerable there on the south side of the farm. The north side of Hank and Rachel's very much less so."

"Why did you put him down there?"

"There was a good well."

"Did we have enough of the Spearhead's?"

"We came up a bit short and the ammo carrier's don't have them. We had enough, but I kept back 4, one for the each of us old veterans."

"Custer was outnumbered by perhaps 25 to one. In the Valley of the Little Bighorn River, the Seventh Cavalry and their Indian allies attacked the village of 6,000 to 7,000 people, on June 25th, 1876. After the battle was over, 263 7th Cavalrymen lay dead, including George Custer. Three hundred fifty 7th Cavalrymen survived. It kind of makes you wonder how it would have turned out if they'd had repeating rifles."

"Or, Gatling guns. You know, it depends on where you read how many Indians were up against Custer. I heard it was around 950 lodges or about 1,200 Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho. I do know one thing, 24 Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded for the Battle of the Little Bighorn from the Hilltop Fight."

"I guess in the end, it's always about firepower. The thing about it is, if we do get attacked, those people are likely to have assault rifles too."

"That's why I asked Tom to get me those machineguns. And it's why those extra 2 guns you got might be very important."

"I really hope not. I've seen enough battles and firefights to last me for a lifetime."

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I was doing some reading, trying to keep up on the latest medical updates when I ran into an article on some of the drugs that were marketed very strongly for a while:

Trick or Treat?

Menopause

Symptoms: include hot flushes, night sweats and loss of libido.

Criticism: too often "medicalized" as part of a "disorder" when it is a normal phase of life,

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Symptoms: include constipation, cramps and diarrhea.

Criticism: promoted by drug companies as a serious illness needing therapy, when it is usually a mild problem.

Sexual Dysfunction

Symptoms: impotence in men, lack of libido or difficulty becoming aroused in women.

Criticism: drugs such as Viagra marketed not only for treating genuine erectile dysfunction caused by medical problems but as lifestyle improvers.

Osteoporosis

Symptoms: thinning of the bones, particularly among postmenopausal women.

Criticism: portrayed as a disease in its own right, when it is really a risk factor for broken bones.

Restless Legs

Symptoms: urge to move legs because of unpleasant feelings, often at night.

Criticism: prevalence of a relatively rare condition exaggerated by the media, along with the need for treatment.

H5N1

Symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, eye infections, pneumonia and severe respiratory diseases.

Criticism: if you didn't get it by now, you're safe, the pandemic was in 2008. There may be some residual radiation around, however, thank Beijing.

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You might be asking about the rule of threes – bad things always happen in threes. I didn't believe in that, not after 2 tours in Iraq. Maybe June did, but I can't speak for her. If you're counting, we had the year without winter and the year without summer. That

could be two, but they were more inconvenient weather than anything else. We hadn't lost any crops, just hadn't planted one. This year was looking more like normal, the crops were beginning to emerge and they were well protected, which accounts for everything but our friend Murphy.

What did that mean, a failure of the 2mw wind turbine, attacks by the bad guys, whoever they were, or possibly something worse like the ATF showing up and finding the stills? We could have a tornado come ripping through and wipe out part of the crop, but only God controlled the weather. I looked on Randy's computer and there under *Disasters* in his *My Documents* folder were listed both man-made and natural disasters in alphabetical order (Microsoft default). Natural disasters started with Avalanche through Volcanoes and man-made disasters included climate change, global warming and nuclear war.

The man was organized; you had to give him that. Under Volcanoes was a file titled *Yellowstone* and another titled *Long Valley*. The 6 page Yellowstone file had all the information I needed. On page 5 it showed a map of the various ash beds, Huckleberry Ridge, Mesa Falls, Lava Creek and Bishop. Every single one of those covered this area of Kansas although we were at the far reach of the Mesa Falls tuff. Bottom line was, if we had another Supervolcano, we'd get covered and covered well. The greatest natural disaster likely in our area was a tornado, but you knew that. We were 2 states away from the New Madrid Fault Zone.

We'd have the flu pandemic and I didn't think we'd have a second nuclear war. That sort of left being attacked by *bad guys* in a class by itself. If a Platoon of well-trained mercenaries couldn't handle them with our help, we were in big trouble. Each group had 4 5.56mm and 2 7.62mm machineguns plus 1 Ma Deuce and 4 Grenadiers. They should be able to hold for the 5 minutes it would take the other combined squad to join them and for us to get our act together. Can you imagine the hail of lead and grenades the opposition would be up against? On the other hand, can you imagine the hail of lead our group might be up against? With the loosening of the NFA, there were a fair number of select fire weapons running around out there.

Guess who showed up? Big Jake and his pals; it seems like they were expecting trouble too and while they had the weapons taken from the guys who seized Leoti, they were a tad short on ammo. We had lots of 5.56 and a little of the 7.62 we could spare. Selling them ammo at cost beat having to put together a party to go rescue them a second time. It was the least we could do, that 2mw wind turbine had been a gift from them and a God sent for us. I know, that was before my time, but the fruits of that gift were still providing us with nearly free electricity. Nothing is free, we had to pay Ralph.

"How's the garden coming?" I asked June.

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"I don't know if we'll make a profit, but plenty of folks are going to eat this winter."

"We have a good corn crop and the Sheriff is bought off for this year," I chuckled explaining about giving him a couple of bottles of the '14 batch. "How would you feel about doing 24 barrels this year?"

"For all I care, you can make 36, but I won't visit you in prison if you get caught."

"Are you serious?"

"As a heart attack. If it doesn't meet standards, you can't put the label on it, I won't allow that."

"We won't know for 5 years, will we? Besides, it would all be the same recipe that Randy perfected, so it should be good if we're patient."

"You get enough bourbon in the hay mow and you won't have room for hay. Is it going to be a good year in the fields?"

"Jason says 60 bushel beans and at least 150 bushel corn. Let's wait and see how the corn does, if the yield is especially high, we might convert the bonus into liquid gold and store up enough for feed grain for a couple of years."

"How did you divide up the grass crops?"

"I didn't, Jason runs the farm, but he put in 40 acres of alfalfa, 40 acres of wheat, 40 acres of oats, 40 acres of timothy and 40 acres of barley. He said we could always sell some of the extra wheat and barley to the elevator coop and even package some of it for the stores, if you wanted to."

"We will store some to mill into flour and corn meal, but it will depend on what Marilyn wants to do at the processing plant. I ordered another ton of rice from Arkansas. It may seem like a lot, but we go through at least a bag a year per family."

June claimed rice was better for you than potatoes. She'd always ask, "Have you seen many fat Chinese?" Born and raised on an Iowa farm, I'd been a meat and potatoes man, but I expect eating rice had helped me shed that 15 pounds. There were 4-5 acres of potatoes planted, Russets and Yukon Gold for baking and boiling.

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Around 1:30pm on Thursday, June 22, 2017, our worst nightmare came true. I was sitting on Gunny's front porch visiting and enjoying a glass of lemonade when we heard the radio call. It came from Squad 1 on the northeast corner of Rachel and Hank's.

Squad 2 was on the northwest corner, Squad 3 was on the southeast corner of our farm and Squad 4 on the southwest corner.

"This is squad 1, be advised we're stopping 2 pickups carrying loads of men."

"We'd better go check on that," Gunny said putting down his lemonade.

We fired up his pickup and hadn't made it a quarter mile when the SINCGARS blared, "Squad 1, shots fired."

Gunny beat me to the mike, "All units, shots fired at Squad 1's location, converge on squad 1's location."

Our carefully orchestrated plan called for the 4 squads to converge on the location where there was trouble. Squad 2 could make it in a minute, Squad 3 in 2 minutes and Squad 4 in 3 minutes plus. No doubt, June would put in a call to Doc and be anxiously waiting for any casualties. She'd probably put in a call to the Sheriff too, but it would take them 20 minutes to respond. Gunny and I were looking at just under 2 minutes ourselves.

"Squad 2 taking fire."

I'm sure that Hank and Ray took off cross-Country to Squad 1's position and Squad 3 was north bound to supplement Squad 1. Squad 4 was not far behind us and had to pass Squad 2's position to get to Squad 1, so they could backup Squad 2. Squad 1 and Squad 4 had the Ma Deuces and Squads 2 and 3 the corpsmen. Each squad had one man equipped with a scoped M1A.

"Crap, we're going to get it good," Gunny observed.

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"This is June; I notified the Sheriff, 15 minutes."

"June, ask him to request mutual aid."

"Negative, they have a disturbance in Garden City, a food riot. The Sheriff and 10 Deputies are responding. Reserves are assembling."

"10-4."

"Squad 1 needs backup!"

"Squad 2 needs backup; we're up against over 30."

"Squad 3 is 60 seconds out, hang on."

"Squad 4, ETA 90 seconds to Squad 2."

"June, advise everyone to get the garden crews and the factory workers armed and ready to turn out."

"June acknowledges; Doc is on his way."

At the moment, I've have given anything for a set of Interceptor body armor or Dragon Skin, but we did have level 3A vests without plates. The 4 squads were fully equipped and wearing Pinnacle Armor's Dragon Skin. Don't believe the crap you may have read in the paper or heard on the news, it is very good stuff. They had level V with the full body wraps, SOV-3000.

We didn't even make it to the corner where Squad 2 was deployed before we got a round through Gunny's windshield. I couldn't hear anything but automatic weapons fire. Some of those weapons were AK's; remember what Gunny Highway said in the movie? This wasn't the Middle East, so we didn't expect to have to go up against RPGs.

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I didn't want to have to use any of these supplies I had. I turned on the lab equipment to have it warmed up and ready to go. This older stuff had to warm up and go through a self-check before you could use it. X ray was different; you just turned it on and pushed a button once you got the plate where it needed to be. Then you put the plate in the machine and it processed the film.

Serum albumin replaced dried plasma for combat use during the Korean War. Most blood plasma was now fresh frozen (FFP) and stored at -80° C, but has a shelf life of one year. FFP that has been stored more than a standard length of time is re-classified as simply "frozen plasma", which is identical except that the coagulation factors are no longer considered completely viable. Each unit of FFP contains 225 ml of plasma derived from a single whole blood unit. I kept 12 units of FFP and donated it to the hospital every 6 months, replacing it with new units. In turn, they donated almost expired drugs to me that were still good, it was our little secret, so don't tell anyone.

I think Randy mentioned things that you can't store past their expiration date in his part of this story, but I'll remind you, epinephrine, cyclines, FFP, and certain antibiotics and vaccines. On the other hand, some things will store for nearly forever. I can hear the gunfire all the way down here, in my basement 2¼ miles from the corner Squad 2 was covering. When I heard that first gunshot, I immediately thought of Randy, Paul and Mike. Not again, don't let anyone on our side get hurt.

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Gunny and I were wearing shooting glasses or we probably would have gotten glass

fragments in our eyes. Did you ever look at a bullet hole in a window and wonder where the glass particles that constituted the hole went? Everywhere! From the size of the hole, that had been a shotgun slug.

"SUM BIT!" Gunny grouched at the hole. (Gleason later stated that one of his greatest joys was learning that people in the Deep South had picked up using "sum bit" from the film. Gunny had spent a fair amount of time at Camp Lejeune.) We were already sliding to a stop and beginning to egress the vehicle (bailing out).

I didn't need the scope at this range so I detached it by flipping the levers on the A.R.M.S. mount. I could see we had one man down, wounded, not dead. He was holding an ACS to his upper left arm. I rushed up and added the bandage to hold it in place; he could shoot if his hand was free. Then I started to shoot back.

The opponents had a mix of just about every kind of assault weapon there was, FALs, HKs, ARs, M16s, a couple of Garand's and a couple of shotguns. We had the real firepower and had more as Squad 4 pulled in. Squad 3 had arrived at Squad 1's location and it sounded like they were holding their own.

A bullet hit the ground near my head, blasting me with gravel. A second slid its way down my back along the level IIIA vest. I heard Gunny curse a string of foul language, but he was behind me and I didn't look around as long as he was still cussing. This went on for an eternity, maybe 10 minutes. And then, it was over, they couldn't long stand up to the fire from machineguns and grenade launchers. The men moved forward to finish off the attackers and get their weapons. I went to check on Gunny.

"You're bleeding; let me get a bandage on that."

"So are you."

"Where?"

"You have some gashes in your face."

"Oh, that must have been that near miss that threw up the gravel. I'll bandage you and you can put a Band-Aid on me."

"Squad 1, Gunny. Sitrep."

"We got them all, Gunny, one dead and 2 wounded on our side."

"Roger. Evac them to the clinic on June's farm."

"June, Gunny."

"June."

"They are bringing in 2 wounded from Squad 1's location and 3 from ours. One fatality at Squad 1's location, none here; I recommend warming plasma at this time.

"Roger."

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"What do we have?" Doc asked.

"Five wounded and one fatality. Gunny recommended warming plasma."

"Do you know their conditions?"

"No."

"Call and ask."

"Gunny, this is June, Doc wants more data on the wounded."

"Dan has gravel cuts in his cheek, I took a graze on my right arm and we have one with a through and through in the upper left arm. Call Squad 1 directly for their sitrep."

"Squad 1, June, sitrep, be specific."

"Squad 1, we have one upper leg wound with heavy blood loss and one with a bullet through his hand."

"Two units should be enough to start with June; they probably have him on ringers."

"Thawing 2 units of plasma."

"We may have to open the thigh to repair the artery, ready to do surgery?"

"No."

"Do you have a surgical set?"

"Yes, in the autoclave."

"Good, pull them out and cool them off."

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We arrived at our house ahead of the people from squad 1. June went to work on Dan's face, Doc examined the bullet wound in the man's arm and the corpsman debrided the

gouge in my arm. I got by without stitches and Dan got a couple of butterflies. Doc asked the corpsman to debride the wound in the man's arm, there was no arterial damage and June and he went to work on the guy with the bullet in his thigh when he arrived minutes later.

The Sheriff's cars blew by just as we arrived at the clinic, code 3. No way were we going to give up the captured weapons, if they used NATO ammo. If the Sheriff wanted the Russian stuff, he could have that. It wasn't 10 minutes before the Sheriff and one Deputy were back to take statements.

"Those guys didn't have a snowball's chance in hell."

"They shot first; it was purely self-defense, Sheriff."

"No survivors on their side?"

"The order was El Degüello, Sheriff, no quarter. They came at us; we didn't go looking for them. We lost one killed and one badly wounded, Doc and June are doing surgery."

"You heard about Garden City?"

"Something about a food riot?"

"Yes. Anything you can do to help out on that?"

"We don't have any meat ready for market, but we do have wheat, barley, rice and corn plus the first crops out of the garden. Will that help?"

"Got any beans?"

"Probably 900 pounds among all of us; they'd be pinto beans."

"How much rice?"

"Maybe 2,300 pounds, we just got a ton in."

"I'm sure they could use all of that. Hang on. Dispatch, this is the Sheriff. Call Finney County and find out if they will guarantee payment in gold for wheat, barley, rice, corn, pinto beans and fresh canned vegetables, I'll stand by."

"Sheriff, you know, I just might have a case of bourbon for you and your Deputies to divide up, it's the 2016, sorry."

"You were right; it all tastes the same anyway."

"Sheriff, Dispatch."

"This is the Sheriff."

"Yes sir, they'll pay in gold."

◦

We loaded up the beans, rice and about 2 tons of wheat, ½ ton barley and ½ ton corn. I knew for sure we could replace the rice and we were growing pinto beans this year. There wouldn't be enough to sell, but we could replace our stock. If they wanted more wheat, barley or corn, we had some that we'd been saving for our last batch of livestock feed. We also had a few ton of oats if they could figure out how to use them.

◦

Dan wasn't badly hurt, much to my relief. He had a couple of cuts on his right cheek that I cleaned and closed with butterfly strips. The guy with the leg wound lost a fair amount of blood, but we didn't have any whole blood immediately available. Everyone was typed, so while we worked on his leg, a corpsman drew a pint from our only volunteer to replace at least some of the erythrocytes. The guy was B- and he was lucky we got one pint. Only 2% of the population has type B- blood. Doc said he'd locate another pint and hold it for me at the hospital.

He had called me A Lady for All Seasons and I had quoted a line from the movie. I'd gone to Wiki and looked up Thomas More. Here's what I found:

Roman Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton said that More was the *greatest historical character in English history*. The 20th-century agnostic playwright Robert Bolt portrayed More as the ultimate man of conscience in his play A Man for All Seasons. That title was borrowed from Robert Whittinton, who wrote in 1520 that More: *is a man of an angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness and affability? And, as time requireth, a man of marvelous mirth and pastimes, and sometime of as sad gravity. A man for all seasons.*

More had said: *Seeing that I see ye are determined to condemn me (God knoweth how) I will now in discharge of my conscience speak my mind plainly and freely touching my indictment and your statute withal.*

And forasmuch as this indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and his holy Church, the supreme government of which, or of any part whereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the Holy See of Rome, a spiritual preeminence by the mouth of our savior himself, personally present upon the earth, only to St. Peter and his successors, bishops of the same see, by special prerogative granted; it is therefore in law amongst Christian men insufficient to charge any Christian man. And for that, he died.

Henry VIII found the Church of England and the Methodist revival originated in England. It was started by a group of men including John Wesley and his younger brother Charles as a movement within the Church of England in the 18th century, focused on Bible study, and a methodical approach to scriptures and Christian living. The term *Methodist* was a pejorative college nickname that was given to a small society of students at Oxford, who met together between 1729 and 1735 for the purpose of mutual improvement. They were accustomed to communicate every week, to fast regularly and to abstain from most forms of amusement and luxury. They also frequently visited poor and sick persons and prisoners in the jail.

Wesley originally had no intention of separating from the Church of England. However, following the American Revolution, the Church of England cut off its American members and refused to ordain ministers for them. Wesley sent Thomas Coke to be superintendent of the Methodist people in America. The Methodists in America received Thomas Coke as their first bishop, though Wesley did not approve of this title, and set up the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, adopting an Episcopal Church governance and a liturgy called *The Sunday Service* that was Wesley's own adaptation of The Book of Common Prayer. Wesley, however, never ceased to be or to act as a priest of the Church of England and died an Anglican. He chartered the first Methodist Church on February 28, 1784. As you can see, in a distant sort of way, Methodists had much in common with Thomas More and I'm sure Randy told you we were Methodists. You can reach anything, if you try.

o

"You don't have any problem with our cutting into our reserves, do you," I asked after.

"Not at all, most of the stuff will be replaced with our new crops and I called for more rice, I got 40 bags, just in case. We probably won't eat that much but it was last season's crop and he wanted to unload it. I even got a bit of a discount. You realize that you're going to have a couple of small scars don't you?"

"If this is the worst I ever get hurt defending the farm, I'll be lucky. We hadn't really expected them to come in from the north, we imagined they be coming up from Lakin."

"Who got killed, one of the married men?"

"He was single, and wanted the food for his parents."

"We don't have much life insurance on those guys."

"I know, just the group term policies for 50 grand, but I thought we could afford to give the food he still had coming to his family."

"That would be nice. Do you have any idea who we'll get as a replacement?"

"Tom said one of the guys he didn't select would have been a good alternate; he's going to call him. How long will that leg wound take to heal?"

"It will take a couple of months for him to be up to full strength. We need to run into Lakin and get the pint of B- that Doc found. They gave him the 500ml bag of ringers and we added 2 225ml bags of plasma. His clotting factor should be much better, but he really needs the red blood cells. Doc said he guessed the blood loss was high, maybe as much as 1,500ml or more and we only replaced 450ml of whole blood, 450ml of plasma and 500ml of ringers. He'd have died without the whole blood and giving him the additional 450ml is urgent, not for volume, but for the red blood cells."

"I'm on my way; I should be back in an hour."

There is an internet calculator where one can estimate the Maximum Allowable Blood Loss (MABL). A 200 pound man weighs about 90kg. I had only entered his weight and left the other variables at default values. The answer was ~1,850ml. Fortunately the corpsmen carried ringers, just like everyone else. The average large male has about 5 liters of blood.

The amount of time it would take for him to recover would depend partly on the amount of blood loss. Blood loss causes hypotension, loss of blood pressure, and that's one reason for the ringer's, to help maintain blood pressure. It also helps to keep electrolytes in balance. Plasma contains coagulants, a key requirement for bleeding to stop. Neither contains red blood cells, the oxygen carriers, but plasma helps remove carbon dioxide. The term pint of whole blood now refers to 450ml and plasma is frozen in half pint or 225ml bags. One unit of plasma replaces about 3% of the coagulants in the body. Our patient would be anemic, at best. (I may figure it all out before I die of old age.) Doc had packed red blood cells, a far better alternative in this situation.

VIPLAS/SD is washed pooled plasma and I could have carried it instead, the FDA approved it back in '98. I didn't, there are pros and cons and Doc suggested using FFP because it came from a single donor.

o

Ray had brewed up a fresh keg of beer for Independence Day. This wasn't a big blow-out; we did hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, fried chicken and made the usual assortment of salads. In light of the events of the previous week, this event was fairly subdued.

The shoot-out resulted in a hearing and the verdict was justifiable homicide. One thing you had to realize was that there were Reserve Deputy Sheriff's on scene at each of the two shoot-outs, Hank and Tom and Squad 1's location and Gunny and me at Squad 2's location. The hearing was closed and the ATF man was called to Garden City to investigate something the Finney County Sheriff dreamed up. You might say that we got a pass all the way around. The Sheriff said to keep the AKs, but to get all of the weapons

on the Registry, a task we somehow managed to overlook.

When the rice order came in, we sold half of it to the folks in Garden City and kept the other 20 bags. Tom hired 2 replacements, one to replace our fatality and one to replace our patient with the leg wound. Once he was released from the clinic, he was put on light duty shuffling the paperwork for the security force, part time.

Rachel had been positively sneaky. She hadn't said a single word and Hank and she slipped into Garden City and gotten married by a Judge. Mike and she had worn plain gold bands and she had continued to wear it after he had been killed. Then when Hank and she got married, they wore plain gold bands and it was only an accident that Marilyn had noticed that Rachel's band now had a rolled embossed edge. You'd have thought Martians had invaded or something when Marilyn figured it out. Hank had moved in but nothing had been said about a wedding. I hadn't thought Rachel the type to live with a man, but there wasn't any announcement of a wedding. *None of my business*, I thought to myself and didn't say anything.

Imagine my surprise when Marilyn told me that Rachel confirmed they were married when Marilyn confronted her over the different rings. All I could do was ask her when.

"This past May they went to Garden City and applied for a license and went back a few days later and were married by a Judge."

"That reminds me of Ray and Susan."

"Ray had to take Sue to the hospital to have her baby."

"I delivered 2 not that long ago, why didn't Susan ask me to do it?"

"She needs a C section, do you do those?"

"I probably could in an emergency, but not generally, no."

o

Crop wise, we were doing fine, except we had to irrigate. The climate was totally screwed up. We had enough heat, but since the year without summer, the moisture had tapered off and the Arkansas was down appreciably, we didn't get a lot of rain. Our saving grace, besides the irrigation, was probably the subsoil moisture. I left the restocking of our E85, propane and coal up to June.

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 13

When it came to handling the draft horses, the best two men for the job were Don and Jim. They could do anything with a team except make them dance and sing. John, Ray and Jason weren't far behind, however. One more season, according to Jim, and we'd be full up with each farm having 64 working draft horses.

Gunny and I were more interested in working with the security force than farming to be totally honest. With the days slowly getting shorter and working the security guards 4 on and 8 off, plus figuring out guard rotations, we had more than enough to do. It was just a shame we couldn't wall in our 3 sections of land, but that would take an 8 mile long wall. In late July, we heard that Big Jake et al had a bit of trouble up in the Leoti area. They got shot up some but none of the 3 men we knew got killed. As it turned out, the food crisis passed quickly when the summer of 2017 produced bumper yields around most of the Country. We all sold record herds of livestock, tons of grain and thousands of jars of garden produce.

"I had 12 guards resign," Tom informed us. "Do you want me to try and hire replacements?"

"Gunny?"

"I wouldn't think so, Dan, there's plenty of food and fuel now, if anything, we should get extra farm hands."

"I tend to agree with Gunny, Hank, what do you think?"

"I think we can cover for an average of 4 per farm, I say not to replace them."

"Ladies? Opinions?"

They had them all right, but most agreed that we could afford to cut the payroll. By the end of September, the gardens had played out and we harvested potatoes. It was an opportune moment for the gardens to be plowed under and readied for the following year. Towards the end, Marilyn ran out of jars ending the canning operation. The best guess was we could recycle about two thirds of the jars that had gone out the door filled with produce. In light of the food shortage, people would probably tend to stock up a bit.

We not only addressed that, but the production of biodiesel to refill our tanks. I took June at her word and Jason, Jim and I decided to produce 36 barrels of bourbon. We'd keep busy well into the winter with Gunny and Don extracting the oil and everyone producing fuel. Rather than harvest timber, we bought enough firewood to maintain a stock of 30 cords for each residence. With her ordering coal in the middle of the winter last year, we didn't need to buy much firewood.

o

I said that I didn't care how much bourbon he made never thinking he would actually decide to take me literally. Dan did and Jason, Jim and he put up 36 barrels, ~1,440 gallons of bourbon. Even with a 30% evaporation loss, when it was ready, the 3 of them would have about 1,336 gallons = 5,057 liters = 6,742 bottles = ~562 cases. It wouldn't be ready to bottle for 5 years, but the quantity was an attention getter. Especially if we sold it for \$240 a case, almost \$135,000 worth of illegal liquor. We never sold more those 90 cases per 6 barrels, so what wasn't sold became our reserve supply. They converted the extra ethanol to anhydrous ethanol and began to make biodiesel.

◦

Author's Note: A whiskey barrel holds 40 gallons and the above calculation was corrected to reflect that.

◦

There were 8 of the converters capable of producing 55 gallons every 3 hours or a daily total of $8 \times 3 \times 55 = 1,320$ gallons per day, 5 days a week. We could store 30,000 gallons on the 3 farms and the remainder was sold. Then, there was the new 30,000 gallon tank to fill. Did Randy tell you that? Sorry, Randy was her first husband and was murdered by FEMA. What had started as a home basement operation was moved to the machine shed and Jason had a pair of converters at his place.

We consolidated everything into the machine shed here, and didn't take down the anhydrous still for a change. The liquor still was dismantled and stored just like every year. If the AFT guys showed up unannounced, he could raise hell if he wanted, stills were illegal, but the residual alcohol was the benzene laced anhydrous. Maybe he'd taste it and we could find a place to hide the body.

Anyway, I wouldn't have wanted to be the federal revenueur if Jim was there, remember how he felt about feds. If he saw a government plate we'd probably have to bury the car too, to eliminate the evidence unless it had been bulletproofed. Be that as it may, I remained uneasy. The climate was an ongoing problem, hence I didn't qualify it as a disaster and the attack had been expected and we were prepared.

That brings me back to bad things happening in threes. Two bad seasons and the attack might qualify, but it didn't matter the rule says, if it isn't 3, then its 9 followed by 27. Either way one looked at it we were due for three terrible events. So say we had the 3 events since I came on scene it made 6 and left 3, if you believe in those old wives tales. Any one event could be so bad as to end the cycle; all it had to do was kill you.

The Pepper Jack cheese didn't come out as well as we wanted and June suggested a processed blend of Havarti and American cheese. That was the combination that Hickory Farms used. If you've ever eaten that, you know well the combination works. That became a family project; the biodiesel processing was mostly self-sustaining. We would

start a batch of biodiesel, work on the cheeses and take time out to empty and recharge the biodiesel converter. We also decided to try our hand at various sausages. We had pepperoni and summer sausage in mind to start with. Sausage is mainly meat, fat and spices blended and stuffed into and cured in a casing.

◦

According to the news, there was a big earthquake out in California, but that was half a Country away and we didn't think it affected us. We were wrong but didn't know it; about half of the San Andreas Fault let loose in a M_W 9.2 earthquake and that triggered a re-release of the locked portion of the Cascadian Subduction zone at M_W 8.9. We didn't feel the shaking or get hit by the ensuing tsunami, but the people on the west coast had it bad. What was left of San Francisco and Seattle crumbled. And those mountains, the Cascades, started rumbling.

We take you now to footage filmed by news copter 3 in and around the Bay area. Despite greatly enhanced building codes, much of San Francisco lies in ruins following yesterday's M_W 9.2 quake. The Golden Gate Bridge remains closed pending completion of inspections. You can see the collapsed portions of the Bay Bridge in the following footage.

Our affiliate in Seattle filmed the following footage of the downtown Seattle area. As you can see, the tall buildings all collapsed. The shaking in Seattle lasted for 93 seconds and was followed within 10 minutes by a 20 meter high wave. Damage along the Oregon and Washington coasts is extensive and we hope to have footage for a later broadcast.

The USGS advises that Mt. St. Helens and Lassen Peak in northern California are showing increased activity, possibly related to the movement on the subduction zone. At this time authorities have no estimates of casualties or deaths. However, it has been suggested that loss of life will be high.

Four of the five Volcano Observatories maintained by the USGS, Alaska, Cascades, Long Valley and Yellowstone are reporting increasing small earthquake swarms while the Hawaii Observatory reports no change. At the moment, scientists are discounting possibilities of either of the calderas erupting in a so called Supervolcano. They further state that small to medium sized eruptions of some of the active volcanoes in the Cascades are a distinct possibility.

In local news...

"Man, I'm glad I don't live on the west coast."

"Me too, Dan. You read that pdf file on the computer about Yellowstone, didn't you?"

"Yes I did, I was looking for information about the ash beds from previous major erup-

tions and everything I needed was on page 5. All 4 of those major eruptions dumped some ash on this area of Kansas, including the Mesa Falls eruption at Yellowstone. That may explain why we have such good soil. I wouldn't worry about it June, they say the possibility of another Supervolcano is only about 1 in 773,000."

"How do they figure that?"

"That's the average of the intervals between the other major eruptions."

"If one did erupt, how long would it affect us here?"

"I'm not THAT old, I have no idea. The pamphlet says for years or decades. It would have a major effect on the global climate; causing significant cooling plus we'd have to deal with whatever ash fall there was."

"This may sound heartless, but better them than us."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Dan, what good would that do, if it happens, it happens."

"I just wanted you to know that in terms of preparations, we would be likely to die of old age rather than as a result of a Supervolcano. Look, we have a good 2 year supply of food plus those emergency rations that Randy and you got and you keep updated. We have several sources of electricity and a holding capacity of 30,000 gallons of biodiesel and 10,000-gallons of soybean oil. No matter how cold it got, we have coal for a full season, possibly two plus 30 cords of wood for every homestead."

"Plus we have a security force."

"I wouldn't count on them sweetheart; they have families to take care of. This is just a job to them and if the crap hits the fan in any major sort of way, I'd expect them to leave to care for their loved ones. It doesn't matter; we have large herds of livestock, good flocks and genuine horsepower to work the land. There are children and grandchildren to provide the labor. No matter what might happen, we'll get by. In a way, a Supervolcano would serve to straighten out the climate. It would predictably cause a period of cooling until the ash cleared from the air, but that would offset the global warming that had caused the icecaps to melt thereby, hopefully, lowering the ocean level and allowing the Gulf Stream to rise. At the moment, the world is a mess and we have done it to ourselves. Our existence was so brief in terms of the life of the planet that on a geological timescale, we'd barely be noticed."

o

"You do realize that there is a point where global warming becomes self-sustaining, don't you?" Hank asked.

"How does that work?"

"The Arctic icecap contains thousands of tons of frozen vegetation. If it thaws, the vegetation could begin to rot and release 3 times as much carbon into the atmosphere as we already do."

"I didn't know that."

"As the icecaps melt, less sunlight is reflected back into space and the heat is absorbed into the oceans, further warming the globe."

"So..."

"In the long run, a disaster like a Supervolcano could be very good for the planet. Another thing, how do we know what the effect of the accumulating surface heat has on the core?"

"What do you mean?"

"If the atmosphere is full of carbon dioxide and that causes the greenhouse effect melting the icecaps and warming the oceans, how does that affect the ability of the planet to cool?"

"I don't know, dig Carl Sagan up and ask him."

"Conversely, we know that a super volcanic eruption would put several thousand cubic kilometers of ash in the air and cause global cooling, right?"

"We do know that, yes."

"So, I ask you fellas, would a Supervolcano be that big of a disaster?"

o

"Did you hear him June? Hank seems to think a Supervolcano would be a good thing."

"I heard, but I don't know if I can agree with him. What if we get a large amount of ash dumped on us? How far are we from Yellowstone?"

"Maybe 650 miles as the crow flies on a heading of about 310°."

"And how much ash do you think we would get?"

"Perhaps 2-5cm."

"In English?"

"A couple of inches probably; certainly no more than 5 inches at a distance of over 1,000 km."

"Are you sure?"

"No, I'm not."

"How certain are we that there won't be another caldera forming eruption at Yellowstone?"

"The USGS thinks it is unlikely, June. I'm just an old soldier, not a geologist, seismologist or climatologist."

"Thinking of fading away on me, are you?"

"Not anytime soon, no."

To answer Hank's question about a super volcanic eruption, it would be a big disaster for us, especially if we got 5 inches of ash, the most I thought we could get. The war had only been 8½ years back and we hadn't fully recovered from that, as a Country. Between the global warming and what appeared to be some kind of climate change, it was bad enough in the fall of 2017 as it was. We'd had a good season, a very good season. We got an average of 61 bushels per acre on the soybeans, an outstanding yield and the corn crop was probably never better, a hair over 170 bushels per acre. We'd grown so much produce that we'd gone through all of the jars. Hell, even the bourbon tasted better this year than any previous year.

Don got a small crop of grapes, not much, but he could make a taste of Merlot and see how it might turn out. The rule of thumb, taken from the 613 Commandments in the Bible is that you don't harvest the fruit for the first 3 years. You thought there were only 10? You were 603 short, look it up.

Ray took his time, brewed 10 kegs of very good beer and gave everyone a keg. I had to go to Garden City and get a cooler, tap and bottle of carbon dioxide. I'll have to tell you, I hope it keeps; a fella can't drink much of that stuff. Besides, we had several cases of bourbon. Back when the first batch was bottled in '14, they packaged 94⅔ cases and only sold 90. In the subsequent years, twice as much was bottled and twice as much sold. We were accumulating the stuff at the rate of 9 cases+ a year and probably didn't go through a case a year among all of the families. I'll bet there was enough of that snakebite medicine that I could get bit by every rattlesnake in Kansas.

o

If you asked me, Dan was taking this business about a possible eruption of a volcano as

a lark rather than as serious business. My opinion was far different. The Cascade Range was a direct result of the Cascadian subduction zone. I'm sure that explained why Mt. St. Helens and Lassen Peak were showing activity. The odds of getting a Royal Flush were 1 in 649,739, but that didn't mean people never got them. According to the USGS, the odds were more like 1 in 20,000 for any given day. If the USGS wasn't concerned about Yellowstone and the other places, why did they have 5 Volcano Observation Laboratories?

I knew that the Long Valley Observatory resulted from a strong earthquake swarm that included four magnitude 6 earthquakes which struck the southern margin of Long Valley Caldera associated with a 25-cm, dome-shaped uplift of the caldera floor that occurred in May of 1980. In 1982, the US Geological Survey under the Volcano Hazards Program began an intensive effort to monitor and study geologic unrest in the Long Valley Caldera. The goal of that effort was to provide residents and civil authorities in the area reliable information on the nature of the potential hazards posed by the unrest and timely warning of an impending volcanic eruption, should it develop. Most, perhaps all, volcanic eruptions were preceded and accompanied by geophysical and geochemical changes in the volcanic system. Common precursory indicators of volcanic activity include increased seismicity, ground deformation, and variations in the nature and rate of gas emissions.

If you can't beat them, join them and use their own words to support your opinion. The dome in Mt. St. Helens had been steadily growing since the 1980 eruption and a dozen years back (2005), they thought for a while that it was going to erupt again. There was a period there after the pandemic and the war where we didn't hear much about the status of the mountains, what news the media reported was being driven by *more interesting* events. It was all about numbers of viewers and what sold the most papers.

Dan and the fellas were still producing biodiesel and what little bit of preparation needed to be done could be handled by we women. It wasn't hard, check the medical supplies, make a short list of things we'd need from the store if the end of the world happened again and go get it. Then if the crap hit the fan, my man would be saying, gee, I'm glad I married you; not that he wasn't already.

Toilet paper, Pads, Batteries, Coffee, Sugar, Baking Powder, Baking Soda, Chocolate Chips, Spices.

"Marilyn, June. I've got to run to the store and top off our survival supplies, do you and Rachel want to come along?"

"Yeah, huh, you saw the news report on TV about the problems on the west coast? I figured you'd be calling and I have my list already made. Rachel said she'd be over in about 30 minutes. Deke thinks I'm crazy but Hank was very supportive of Rachel."

"Hank was talking to Dan a little while ago and warned him that we could be in for trouble, but Dan didn't agree. I don't agree with Dan, but it isn't worth arguing over. I don't

need a lot, tp, pads, batteries, coffee and a few baking items." (The pads weren't for me, I didn't need them, but there was Karen, Julia and Mary and they did.)

"Our lists are very much the same. She's here; we'll be there in five minutes."

Err on the side of caution, Randy had said more than once. I wished often he had taken his own advice. I wasn't getting anything we wouldn't use up. In fact, at the first opportunity, many of those things would be supplemented if something bad happened. Another thing, it didn't bother me that Dan didn't agree with Hank. He was producing fuel and we would need that as much as we needed the extra supplies. One other thing I intended to load up on was salt. We could buy it in large bags and who knows; it could come in handy and be our last desperate means of preserving food. Marilyn was driving Paul's 2½ ton truck; her list must have been larger than mine.

It turned out it wasn't but did we load up on tp. We bought sugar in 50 pound bags, a lot of it. Coffee came 12 cans to the case and we nearly emptied the shelf. I don't much care for rechargeable batteries and we loaded up on all the battery sizes, extra bulbs, other things we couldn't grow or substitute, like large bottles of vanilla, cans of pepper, cinnamon, cocoa, dog food for Shep, canned tuna for a quick casserole, rolled oats, napkins and even a couple of extra MagLites. I had everything on the list and then some. Heck, we all did.

We bought in batches and the store provided someone to help load the truck and keep an eye on our purchases as we went back for more. The only way to buy some of the things I wanted was to make several trips, pseudoephedrine being a prime example. I planned of going back to town the next day and getting together with Doc.

When we got home, Dan, Jason, John and Jim helped me unload. Dan gave the overloaded truck a look, paused and shrugged his shoulders. I knew he was a smart man and he had just proved it.

"June, did we really need all of those things?"

"I think so."

"Then I guess we did."

"I'm going back to town tomorrow, just so you know."

"Really?"

"Medical supplies. Is there any size of ammunition you might want a little extra of?"

"Hmm, maybe some calibers."

"Make me a list and I'll pick it up. Do we need anything for the generator, like oil or fil-

ters?"

"You're serious."

"I am, pretend for just a moment that this was the last shopping trip you could make for say 2 or 3 years."

"I'll make you a list. Are you going to need help?"

"Can you spare Jim?"

"Sure. What's the deal?"

"Better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. Do you need any tractor parts, truck parts or anything like that?"

"Jim can stay here and make the biodiesel and I'll go with you, it will be easier that trying to write it all down."

"Fine, I call Doc and have him get together the medical supplies I want."

o

We got parts for both tractors, both pickups and the car including: motor oil, filters, belts, spare lights and spare tires; while we were at it new batteries for all of the vehicles. He took me to lunch, a rare treat because we didn't often get to town. We went to Garden City for most of it and stopped to see his boys.

"Look, there seems to be a possibility of those problems on the west coast getting out of hand. I want both of you to know that if necessary, we have room for you on the farm," I explained.

"What do you expect to happen?"

"No one particular thing, but whatever happens we're prepared and you're welcome. Let's just say you'll know when it happens and don't hesitate to come. I'm certain your father would feel much better if you did."

"We have some preparations," Dan Jr. said

"Good load them up and bring them with you when you come."

"Thanks for lunch, where are you off to now?"

"We off to order ammo and let's just hope it gets here in time. Have you been watching TV?"

"So?"

"Daniel, Jeremy and you should prepare for the worst and hope for the best," I explained.

"Aren't you overreacting?"

"Which is better, overreacting or underreacting?"

Dan just sat there not saying a word. I think he was getting the idea that I was dead serious. Under normal conditions, we could go for a very long time now before we had to reach out and acquire things, like propane or E85; perhaps as long as 2 years. If we did have a calamity, it would be a big one, of that I was certain. We stopped at Coyotes Shooter Supply and Dan placed an order. One more stop and we'd be done, the medical supplies in Lakin.

"Doc, if you need a place to come in case we have another disaster, you're always welcome on the farm."

"Thank you. I got the things you need set up for you at the hospital pharmacy. I wasn't totally certain what you had in mind, so I ordered a bit of most everything."

"All of the 4 mainland volcano labs are reporting earthquake swarms. It could mean nothing or we could get the crap kicked out of us."

"The wife and I might just take you up on the offer, if it happens."

o

"June, where are we going to put all of the people you invited?"

"You'll see; they should be there when we get home."

"See what?"

"The pair of used singlewide mobile homes I bought. I also ordered 3,000-gallon propane tanks for both of them. He guaranteed delivery today and full hookup by the day after tomorrow. If we don't need them for your sons, we can use them for 2 additional farm hands next year."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 14

"You sound like you believed Hank."

"I did."

"You can't believe that Yellowstone is going to erupt."

"I believe that it's possible, it's long overdue."

"The head guy with the USGS says it's highly unlikely."

"That's not the same as saying it can't happen. I'm concerned because the TV report said something about swarming at several of the volcanoes and both of the calderas. We didn't buy that much and it stores well. Call it an ounce of prevention."

"Who am I to argue, June? You've gotten through all of it, H5N1, pneumonic plague, a nuclear war and this unreasonable weather. Tom said we'd lost another 5 guys from the security force. They cited concern over the events on the west coast and wanted to get home to start preps."

"Obviously Hank and I aren't the only two people who think that something could happen."

"Could happen? Anything can happen; I just don't think it's likely. For what it's worth, I glad you went to town and stocked up. I ordered a fair amount of ammo, too. We might as well all be involved, if I didn't and you're right, I'd never forgive myself."

"Nice, isn't it?"

"What's nice?"

"It's nice that all we have to do is watch the news and not worry about what's going to happen."

"Just a few short months ago, people were rioting in Garden City over food and we were attacked. This isn't the peaceful retirement I'd hoped for."

"You know better than that, what did they call WW I?"

"The war to end all wars, and the peace only lasted 20 years."

"The war to end all wars will be fought on the Plain of Jezreel. It will be called the Battle of Har Megiddo. When does the ammo come in?"

"Tomorrow."

"I'll ride along, just to keep you company."

o

"The next thing I know, you'll be warning of the 4 Horsemen."

"They may have already come, Dan. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

"And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

"People have been expecting the End Times since the year 300," he pointed out.

"I know, dear. Call it a foreboding; we could easily be in the 1,000 years of Tribulation. Ah, maybe I'm just getting old but more has happened in the past 10 years or so than it was reasonable to imagine. Wars all over the planet, disease, hunger and the climate is totally messed up. Who is to say that the Anti-Christ isn't already among us?"

o

"Did it all come in?"

"Yes, are you expecting another war or something?"

"Something."

"It's very strange; I've had a run on ammo; sold more than my share of firearms too. Don't know what it all means."

"People are probably reacting to the problems on the west coast," Dan replied.

"The earthquakes?"

"That and what they might portend."

"You think they're an omen?"

"I don't necessarily buy it, but some do. It can't hurt to be a little prepared. Some people even seem to think we're going into the End Times."

"You don't say. They could be right, I never thought I live to see the day we had a food riot here in Garden City. It seems to be ok now, though."

"What do I owe you?"

o

I started chili while Dan unloaded the pickup into the first Quonset hut. Most ammo was now stored in the military supplies hut. The large barrack/day room/kitchen was about half empty and it looked like we'd lose all of our security people before the end of the year. I might have not needed those two used single wide trailer homes after all, but they were really inexpensive and fully furnished. The furniture was well worn; probably why it was included.

Our original 160 had turned into a full section and there wasn't much empty ground around the buildings these days. The warehouse hut was near empty except for the empty jars we were collecting to recycle. Rather than dispose of the cardboard cartons, the stores had saved them and refilled them with the jars which John and Jim were picking up weekly. We paid 25¢ for each quart and 15¢ for each pint that were returned in sound condition. I'm not sure what the store paid the customer for them, less probably. They were beginning to accumulate and if we had another good growing season, we'd need them. We were getting back 3 quarts for every pint, people weren't using up the pickles very fast. We also canned vegetables in pint jars for small families; a pint was about equal in volume to a #303 can.

"We're down to 27 men on the security force. Tom said when we lose the cooks we'll probably just shut down the unit unless you want to cook for them."

"I'll pass. With the barracks is empty, we'll have room to house seasonal workers next summer."

"I was under the impression that you thought we might not have a next summer."

"We might not, but if we do, we can make use of the Quonset hut."

The USGS announced today that three areas of the Country have been placed under a notice of volcanic unrest which corresponds to the yellow or alert level one, status. This alert level is declared by USGS when significant anomalous conditions are recognized that could be indicative of an eventual hazardous volcanic event. The most likely such anomalous condition would be sustained, elevated seismicity. A "notice of volcanic unrest" expresses concern about the potential for hazardous volcanic activity but does not imply imminent hazard. Among the possible outcomes are: (1) anomalous condition is determined not symptomatic of an eventual hazardous volcanic event, leading to cancellation of "notice of volcanic unrest;" (2) symptomatic activity wanes, leading to cancellation of the "notice of volcanic unrest;" (3) conditions evolve so as to indicate progress toward hazardous volcanic activity, leading to issuance of a "volcano advisory" or "volcano alert."

Under this level of alert, Seismic activity is elevated. Potential for eruptive activity is increased. A plume of gas and steam may rise several thousand feet above the volcano which may contain minor amounts of ash. The warning should be considered only a precaution. Specifically the situation at Long Valley, California is elevated to a yellow or watch state describing a state of intense unrest. At Yellowstone, the condition is known as an advisory described as an elevated unrest above known background activity. As of this time, the possibility of an eruption is considered to be remote. The USGS issued a statement at a morning news conference to the effect that the increase in seismic activity may be related to the recent activity on the major faults.

National Geographic channel had scheduled a rerun of the 2005 BBC feature Supervolcano for this evening. There is no word if they still plan to show the 2 hour feature. USA channel has the 1997 feature Volcano starring Tommy Lee Jones and Anne Heche scheduled for the same time and Turner Network Television will be showing 1998's Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World.

"Which one do you want to watch?"

"Let's watch Supervolcano again, Anne Heche can't decide if she's a girl or a boy and the other movie is about dinosaurs," Dan suggested.

"I've never understood this part, if he was so certain that Yellowstone wasn't going to erupt, why did he send his wife and son to England?"

o

Within 3-4 days, a fine dusting of ash could fall across Europe, according to a UK Met Office computer forecast commissioned by the BBC. The computer model predicts how ash would spread following a nine-day June eruption of 1000 cubic km of ash and gas from Yellowstone.

The model shows that the fallout from a Yellowstone super-eruption could affect three

quarters of the US. The greatest danger would be within 1,000 km of the blast where 90 per cent of people could be killed. Large numbers of people would die across the Country – inhaled ash forms a cement-like mixture in human lungs. Even the US East Coast could be paralyzed by 1cm of ash.

Many people think that lava flows are the most dangerous volcanic hazards, but ash is often the biggest killer. Because Supervolcanoes are highly explosive, much of the magma doesn't get a chance to become lava. Instead it is blasted into countless airborne ash particles – tiny scorching particles of jagged rock.

The most wide reaching effect of a Yellowstone eruption would be much colder weather. Volcanoes can inject sulfur gas into the upper atmosphere, forming sulfuric acid aerosols that rapidly spread around the globe. Scientists believe sulfuric aerosols are the main cause of climatic cooling after an eruption.

Aerosols in the upper atmosphere would also scatter sunlight making the sky look like a cloudy winter morning all day long. The skies in Europe would appear red in the days after the eruption.

To predict how the climate may be affected, the BBC relied on historic data from the Toba Supervolcano in Indonesia about 74,000 years ago and computer model forecasts commissioned from the UK Met Office and the Max Planck Institute in Hamburg.

Experts believe a Yellowstone eruption would inject 2,000 million tons of sulfur 40-50km above the Earth's surface. Once there it would take 2-3 weeks for the resulting sulfuric acid aerosols to cloak the globe – with devastating effects.

Global annual average temperatures would drop by up to 10 degrees, according to computer predictions. And the Northern Hemisphere could cool by up to 12 degrees. Experts say colder temperatures could last 6-10 years, gradually returning to normal. Scientists predict that the Monsoon would fail as a result of even larger temperature changes in the Southern Hemisphere, causing mass starvation in the Asian countries that depend on these life-giving rains.

Temperatures in Europe could be at least 5 degrees cooler the summer after the eruption. The actual effects of a Yellowstone super-eruption could be different depending on the size of eruption, the time of year and any number of other factors.

o

"If we had another eruption as big as the first one, how far would the ash spread?"

"It's in the Yellowstone.pdf file, we can look it up."

"That wasn't what I was thinking, Dan. They issued initial alert levels for Yellowstone, the Cascades and Long Valley. Under the guise of prepare for the worst, what would

happen if we had another Huckleberry Ridge and Long Valley occur at the same time with some of the Cascadian volcanoes thrown in for good measure?"

"You're saying something on the order of 1,000mi³ of ash?"

"Say that."

"That's 4,168km³ and several different epicenters. It would take a supercomputer to figure it out, what with the varying wind patterns, length of the eruptions, heights of the ash clouds and so forth. I suppose ash could carry as far east as western Pennsylvania, I really don't know."

"How would that affect the amount of ash we'd get?"

"Wild guess, maybe 10-12 inches."

"Would a foot of ash collapse the roofs?"

"It would if it got wet. The ash would absorb several times its volume in water. 10 inches would be ~25 cm and 12 inches ~30cm."

"They said on that show that 90% of the people within 1,000km would be killed, Dan."

"Unsheltered, yes. We are about 1,050 km and we have a shelter. I think that the biggest problem would be in sheltering the livestock. We don't have room to house everything in our barn."

"I know; that's why we divided up all of the livestock except the dairy cattle and why we have the feed divided up."

o

If a person takes a map of the US and strikes an arc with a 1,000km radius from Yellowstone and another from Long Valley, the map will then show the kill zone of a super eruption at either place, although you could probably get by with a much smaller arc from Long Valley, say 500km. The area where the two circles overlap might ought to be labeled 'The Dead Zone', 'cause if the left one doesn't get you, the right one will. That is, of course, should they both let loose at once as Supervolcanoes? The odds of that happening would be equal to getting 2 royal flushes in the same card game.

Think about that, the odds of one royal flush are 1 in 649,739. Are the events mutually exclusive? The answer is yes, those odds are for any given hand. It doesn't mean that two consecutive hands couldn't be royal flushes. Therefore, you may conclude that the odds of both of the calderas letting loose at the same time are about equal to getting 2 royal flushes in the same card game. One piece of advice I haven't mentioned yet is never say never. As far as the rule of threes go, I guess bad weather could count as

one. However, if both calderas blew at the same time or in close proximity, I'd imagine that would only make two. Forget the attack, it was anticipated and they had hired guns. If the USGS issues an alert level 1, does it follow that an alert level 2 comes next? Not at all, the relationship is probably geometric if one even exists. Ergo, most alert level 3's are probably preceded by alert level 2's and most alert level 2's are probably preceded by alert level 1's, but not the other way around.

For example, scientists have identified at least 27 different rhyolite lava flows that erupted after the most recent caldera eruptions, about 640,000 years ago, from vents inside the (Yellowstone) caldera. The most recent was about 70,000 years ago. Many of these eruptions were separated in time by several tens of thousands of years. Because the evidence of earlier eruptions may have been either buried or destroyed, we do not really know how often the volcano has actually erupted.

◦

"Well, they didn't blow today, what's on TV tonight?"

"Dante's Peak, The Devil at 4 O'Clock or Disaster Zone: Volcano in New York. The USGS has a webpage about Dante's Peak."

"We'll watch it, you like Pierce Brosnan."

"He sort of gets me turned on."

"I remember, want a drink?"

"Sure, an old fashioned. They made something like 55 movies from 1913 to 2001 featuring volcanoes."

"I'll bet they show them all before this is over."

"If they do, they'll probably follow them with the made for TV movies, they're included on a separate page at the same place."

When Dante's Peak ended, we set the NOAA radio to warn us of any further volcano alerts. We watched the news, but they barely mentioned the status at the three observatories except to state the alert levels remained unchanged at the level one, yellow alert stage. We were tired, had a little buzz on and feeling a little romantic. The radio volume was on high, if anything happened, we know it. I was reminded of the boy who called wolf.

◦

"Coffee's ready, bacon and eggs or pancakes?"

"Eggs. Anything happening with the alert levels?"

"Still monitoring, this could go on for weeks."

"I think we'll try to get as much biodiesel processed as we can. I'd like to have the tanks as full as soon as possible. I'm going to give everyone a ring and suggest we do 4 batches a day per converter instead of 3."

"Dan, we have many more people now, I don't believe we have room in the shelter for everyone."

"That's what Gunny said. He's going to take the storm shelter of Marilyn's and expand it. As it is, it's full of stored emergency supplies."

"What about Hank and Rachel?"

"He had a contractor coming in to dig a trench big enough to hold a standard Quonset hut. As soon as the trench is open, the contractor will assemble the hut and they'll cover with a concrete cap and backfill the soil. What do you want to do about Ralph and Johnny, Jason and Karen and Tom and Elle?"

"I'll talk to Marilyn and Rachel and we'll figure something out. Last time we had 10 people in the shelter. With the kids, that will about fill it up."

"I wonder if we couldn't find some way to bury that barracks."

"That's a lot of soil to move and a lot of concrete to add a cap."

"How thick of a concrete cap?"

"Whatever the contractor thinks it will take to support the weight of the soil. June could you call him and find out if he'd have time to dig a trench, cap the hut and backfill it with in a couple of weeks? Find out how thick of a cap he thinks it will take to support the soil. The cylindrical shape of the hut should help."

"I can do that, be sure to leave me the number."

o

For me, it was just more of the same. The culvert shelter had been buried 18' and was covered with 8' of soil but no concrete. That provided a radiation protection factor of ~100 million. Who knows, maybe we wouldn't need that. I'd ask and follow the contractor's recommendation. The men could put in an extra 3 hours, a 16 hour day, and we'd have room for everybody, including Doc Williams if he wanted.

"Doc, June, how are you doing today? Really? Great; say, have you been following the

thing on the west coast? Well, we've lost or will be losing our entire security force leaving us with a barracks that sleeps 60, has a dayroom and a kitchen setup. With all of the extra people here, we're planning on burying it to add additional shelter space in case the calderas do erupt. It is not silly! Where were you during the fallout period after WW III? Anyway, I called to offer you and your wife space in the shelter. We'll probably have Ralph and Johnny there plus Jason, Karen and their four kids. You will? Great. No, the only thing you need to bring is clothes, any survival supplies you may have and medical supplies you keep handy. Well, I haven't talked to the contractor yet, but we're shooting for 2 weeks."

"Hi, this is June Robbins, Dan wife. Fine, thank you. Are you doing the project for Hank and Rachel? Could you handle another Quonset hut? 100' by 40'. Oh, 8' of cover. Say, do you think the hut will be enough to support the weight of the soil or will we need to add a concrete cap? How thick? No, I'll ask Dan. The really big question is how fast can you get it done? Well, we were hoping by two weeks from now. No, we don't have a generator for the hut, but we do have a 3,000 gallon propane tank. We were thinking about a LUWA filter, what size do you think? A 300? I'll mention it. No, go ahead and start and I'll get back to you."

o

"Do you have a minute?"

"Sure, I just started the next batch, I have 3 hours."

"First, I talked to Doc and he and his wife would like to shelter in the warehouse. Then, I talked to the contractor and he said we could get by ok without the concrete, but he'd recommend a 1' cap. He can have it done in 2 weeks without the cap or in 3 weeks with the cap. He recommended a LUWA air filtration system twice the size of the one we have now. He also recommended a standby generator."

"Did you tell him we had a propane tank?"

"Yes it's big enough as long as it starts out full and we can run the generator off of our second 30,000 gallon propane tank. We'd have to get the propane plumbed to the new shelter. He'd put in a black water system and sewage pump like we have in the shelter and recommended a direction connection to the well."

"What did you tell him, to go ahead or is he waiting on me to decide?"

"Dan I told him to go ahead and I'd ask you about the concrete."

"What is your feeling on the concrete?"

"I think it's a waste of money. I can't believe we'd get any significant over pressure and the hut is a half cylinder. We'd be better off to put in a slab or foundation to anchor the

base of the hut. I know that it will increase the installation to 3 weeks, but I be comfortable with that."

"Fine, let him know. What are we going to do about getting the ash off the roofs if it comes to that?"

"I was thinking we could get a portable pump capable of pumping 1,500gpm."

"Where would you get something like that?"

"I was thinking about looking for an old fire pump truck. I did a quick search on the net and found several with 500 gallon tanks and 1,500gpm pumps for under \$20,000. I also saw a 1984 American LaFrance Century for \$26,000."

"Do you have time to follow up on that?"

"I have their number; I call and see what I can arrange. Water shouldn't be a problem, not with a 12" well."

"Could you bring me a sandwich and coffee around noon?"

"Got you covered."

o

I made macaroni salad and at lunchtime took Dan, the salad, a ham sandwich, a pot of coffee and a bottle of beer. I explain to him that I'd gotten a 1984 pumper with low hours and a 1,250gpm pump for \$18,500. They would delivery as soon as a bank wire cleared their account. I suggested that we clear all the cash out of our account in gold and silver and only leave a minimum balance of \$10,000. He told me to go ahead on the fire truck and get someone to ride shotgun with me when I went to the bank. I think I finally have him convinced. He said he'd be working late and would appreciate something hot for dinner if I could manage.

"Marilyn, June, how is Gunny coming on your shelter?"

"I'll tell you kiddo, he's been looking at it and it's a bigger project than he thought. Paul used a poured concrete wall to build the thing and he says it would be easier to just start over."

"We're burying the barracks and it should be available in less than 3 weeks. Why don't we put John and Mary, Jim and Julia and Don and Sandy in it with Doc Williams, Ralph and Johnny and Jason and Karen? You and Gunny can shelter with us like you did the last time."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 15

"I'll talk to Deke and drive over. What are you doing for supper?"

"I hadn't decided, Dan wants to do 4 loads of biodiesel and I was trying to think of something easy."

"I've got a couple of chickens thawed, I bring you one when I come over and you can feed him fried chicken."

"That ought to work just fine. I made macaroni salad so if you want some for Gunny, bring a bowl and I'll share."

"You knew that Rachel and Hank are going to bury a standard sized Quonset hut and cover with a foot of concrete don't you?"

"I heard, but he must be thinking WW IV, the concrete isn't necessary according to the contractor."

o

"Here's the chicken."

"The salad is in the refrigerator, take all you want, I made a big batch."

"How long is this going to go on?"

"I think the original warning on Mt. St. Helen's came in March of '80 and it didn't erupt until May of '80. We should have ample time, but I suppose you never know. Want coffee or do you want to split a beer?"

"I take the beer, thanks. How did you manage to get Dan to come around?"

"I laid it on thick. I quote the passage out of Revelations about the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse. And we did some projections of the worst case scenario, Yellowstone, Long Valley and some of the Cascade volcanoes erupting. Based on 1,000mi³ of ash, we could get up to a foot of ash. And that much ash could cause the roofs of the buildings to collapse."

"What are we going to do about that?"

"Use my shiny new used fire engine to hose 'em off."

"Your what?"

"I bought a used 1984 fire engine with a 1,250gpm pump. We can get water from our

big wells and hose the roofs off."

"Sometimes, I think you go off the deep end, girl."

"It comes complete with new hoses and all of the accessories, but they cost extra. I'm pretty sure it will work and after we get our roofs cleared off, I'll rent it to the Volunteer Fire Department. They're going to have a lot of roofs to clear."

"That assumes that this happens the way you think it will."

"Too true. Crap, that NOAA gadget is screaming, let's turn on the TV."

The USGS has issued a volcano advisory for Yellowstone caldera. This alert level is declared by USGS when monitoring and evaluation indicate that processes are underway that have significant likelihood of culminating in hazardous volcanic activity but when the evidence does not indicate that a life- or property-threatening event is imminent. This alert level is used to emphasize heightened concern about potential hazard. Among the possible outcomes are: (1) precursory activity wanes, leading either to cancellation of the "volcano advisory" or to a downgrade of alert level to "notice of volcanic unrest;" (2) conditions evolve so as to indicate that a life-threatening volcanic or hydrologic event is imminent or underway, leading to issuance of a "volcano alert." "Volcano advisory" statements, supplemented as appropriate by "updated volcano advisory" statements will clarify as fully as possible USGS understanding of the hazard implications. Small ash eruption expected or confirmed. Plume(s) not likely to rise above 25,000 feet above sea level. Seismic disturbance recorded on local seismic stations, but not recorded at more distant locations.

Please stay tuned for further developments.

"Crap, I've gotta git. Is it time to circle the wagons?"

"Not yet, Marilyn, this is their orange alert. We're down from months to weeks"

o

"Dan, I have 2 bits of news, good and bad, take your pick."

"Give me the good news."

"Fried chicken for supper."

"What's the bad news?"

"The USGS just raised the alert level to orange."

"Where?"

"Yellowstone."

"Crap. I'll have this batch running in 30 minutes, will supper be ready?"

"Sure will."

"I'll come in and eat, I need a break. Where did you get the chicken?"

"Marilyn was over."

"Smashed potatoes and gravy?"

"Uh, sure."

I hadn't wired the money because the bank was closed. They told me 10 days to get it here, they were in Vermont. Maybe it was time for plan B. There was no way we could risk burying the barracks hut, we'd have to settle for installing the filtration system and buying some kind of portable pump.

"I'll wash up, supper ready?"

"Chicken's done, potatoes are done; I just have to make the gravy and we can eat."

"When do we get the fire engine?"

"Wash up and we'll talk over dinner; I think we may have to go to plan B."

o

"Ok, tell me, what is plan B?"

"I don't really have one, but I didn't wire the money for the fire engine because the bank was closed, and they said 10 days to deliver."

"Do we have 10 days?"

"I really don't know; if we assume we do, Murphy will get us for sure. I think burying the barracks is out too, he said 3 weeks on that. How about we just install the filtration system and buy a portable pump of some kind and some hose?"

"Is it going to erupt for sure?"

"That's not what the alert means, it could just as easily go back down to an advisory. And, even if it went up to a warning, it doesn't mean the eruption would be a Supervolcano."

"What about the LUWA system?"

"He had a model 300 in stock."

"I'll let the others process the oil tomorrow and we'll go to the bank, find a pump, arrange for the contractor to install the air filter and you can cancel the fire truck. What's on TV tonight?"

"I'd guess they'll all be running network specials about Yellowstone and trying to scare everyone to death."

"What have you been doing while the processor is running?"

"Reading Rainbow Six, I never finished it."

"Get distracted did you?"

"I did and that distraction got a good do on her fried chicken."

"Thank you. We're going to have to put in a propane fueled backup generator for the barracks, add that to our to-do list for tomorrow."

"Any news on the Cascades or Long Valley?"

"The advisory only applied to Yellowstone, so I'd guess they're unchanged. I'll wash the dishes and we can watch the news for a while. It will be at least 2 hours before your last batch is done, right?"

"That's about right, any particular channel?"

"Anything but CNN, try NBC."

...giving the residents of California good news for a change. The minor eruption occurred near Mono Lake and geologists believe that it relieved the pressure that had accumulated in Long Valley. Cleanup continues in the major cities struck by the two earthquakes.

In the Seattle area, cleanup continued today with the discovery of another 207 bodies of people believed killed in the earthquake and tsunami. The Gates Foundation pledged an additional \$25 million to aid in the relief effort.

"I hope they give it out in money instead of computers and software."

"Shhh."

We take you now to Salt Lake City to a news conference in progress concerning the situation at Yellowstone.

...and we do not anticipate a further escalation of the seismic activity at Yellowstone at this time. The rise in the alert level was occasioned by the opening of several new steam vents during the past 24 hours. Seismographs indicate an ongoing movement of magma towards the surface, but we consider it unlike that it will produce anything more than small rhyolite lava flows.

Before I conclude this discussion, it is important to comment on the origin of the of the Oligocene, Columbia Plateau basalt field of western Oregon and Washington that has been attributed to the same mantle plume source as the Yellowstone hotspot. While there is no systematic time progression of the Columbia Plateau basalts, the immense scale and synchronicity of timing of this volcanic field suggests a similar mantle source for both Yellowstone and the Columbia basalts. I'll take a few questions now.

Wait, this just came in, seismologists at the Cascades Volcano Observatory indicate an increase in activity levels at Mt. Rainier and Mt. Shasta. Mt. Rainier is especially worrisome because of the amounts of snow and ice on the mountain. Any volcanic activity could result in massive lahars, far greater than those witnessed at the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helen's. Mount Shasta, a compound stratovolcano rising 3,500 meters above its base to an elevation of 4,317 meters, dominates the landscape of northern California. ... Mount Shasta hosts five glaciers, including the Whitney Glacier, the largest in California. Shastina is a large subsidiary cone that rises to 3,758 meters on the west flank of the compound volcano.

We'll take a break for local news and return to our coverage of the developing situation in the western part of the Country.

"I'd better go transfer that last batch of biodiesel. I'll be back in 30 minutes."

o

We spent the next day in Lakin and Garden City, arranging for a new Onan RS30 1,800rpm, propane fueled 30kw generator. The generator used from 1.9 to 4.2gph the same as the one we had. We picked up the AV-300 air filter, taking the money out of the bank and called Vermont to cancel the fire engine and finally finding a 750gpm pump. The contractor said he could have everything installed in 2 days. At this point in time, everyone had either topped off their biodiesel tanks or was nearly finished. There were still several thousand bushels of soybeans to press, but no more room for the soybean oil. Don estimated that improvements he'd made to the press increased the efficiency from 80% oil recovery to just short of 90% recovery.

If it is any indication of the resolution of this past year's food crisis, the stores were offering turkeys in their pre-Thanksgiving sales at 50% off. I decided to do my pre-Thanksgiving grocery shopping. I gave Marilyn and Rachel each a call to see if they

wanted to come along. They said, at that price, they'd better stock up on turkeys and get the sweet potatoes and other things they needed for Thanksgiving.

"How is Hank coming on the shelter?"

"Not so hot, we got the Quonset hut just lying there in pieces, but they hit rock when they tried to excavate a hole to bury it. I'm not sure what he plans to do."

"You could erect it above ground, Rachel. You have everything you need, right? Generator, air system, food and furniture to equip it?"

"Yes, but he wanted to bury it."

"I talked to the same contractor about burying our barracks hut, but he said it would take 3 weeks so we decided to just leave it where it is and use it as is. We added a propane generator in case we lose the wind turbines and the air filter and it's will be ready to go in 2 days. If you don't get yours up in time, we'll have room for everyone in the barracks."

"The security force all gone now?"

"The last ones pulled out last week; they wanted to get back with their families."

"Did you watch the news last night? CNN seemed to think the world was ending," Marilyn asked.

"We watched NBC. CNN hasn't been worth a dam since Bernard Shaw retired in 2001."

"Speaking of old time TV personalities, whatever happened to Geraldo?"

"I haven't heard about him since the war, maybe he tried to report a nuclear weapon detonating live." (600 yards...)

"Are we ready if the caldera does explode?"

"We have food, a place to stay, a means of defense and Doc and his wife will be staying with us so most of the bases are covered," I observed.

"Will it explode for sure?"

"That's hard to say, Rachel, it should, sometime within the next 100,000 years."

"Hey do you want to do a big combined Thanksgiving dinner in the barracks? We're just having the kids over."

"Why the hell not?" Marilyn responded. "It was cut our work load by two-thirds."

"Sure," Rachel added.

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We bought a dozen turkeys in the 22 pound class, Pepperidge Farm dressing, cranberries, sweet potatoes and stuff for various kinds of salads. When we came out of the store, a light skiff of snow was falling. Much later this year and it didn't seem to be snowing very heavily; it was time to change the tires on the vehicles. We had the studded snow tires mounted on extra wheels, it wouldn't take long.

I hadn't been called out on a Reserve Deputy call-up in months, and when we needed the Sheriff, the shooting was over before he got here. That was only a little more than 3 months back. The warehouse was mostly filled with bags of potatoes and onions plus the jars we were collecting for next season. The guy with the leg wound healed up ok and he was one of the first to leave.

Dan and Gunny rigged a cable to feed the old 32" color TV that was moved from the shelter to the barracks. With no war looming, the shelter became what it was supposed to be, a storm shelter. As such, it could hold a lot of people for a short time. We were spending money like there would be no tomorrow, but between the crops, garden, bourbon and livestock sales we were accumulating faster than we were spending. Most things were done in the name of the corporation.

Thanksgiving dinner was a complete success with 2 turkeys to eat, smashed potatoes, candied sweet potatoes, 6 varieties of salads, homemade bread made from homegrown wheat, the ever present green bean casserole, and pumpkin pie. Most everyone ate too much and when you eat too much, you get sleepy. It is the whole traditional Thanksgiving meal that can produce that after-dinner lethargy. The meal is quite often heavy and high in carbohydrates – from mashed potatoes, bread, stuffing and pie – and your body is working hard to digest that food. Having a drink or two doesn't help either.

The little kids wanted to watch cartoons and the big kids wanted football. I think you know who won that argument, the men moved to the house. We deboned the leftover turkey, divided up the salads, washed the dishes and sat down to visit over a much needed cup of coffee.

"It was foolish buying all of that extra food, it's been 2 weeks or more since they raised the warning level at Yellowstone to orange and nothing has happened," Rachel noted.

"Rachel, we didn't buy anything we won't use up. I won't be comfortable until they lower the level back to green."

"Hank finally gave up on the underground Quonset hut and had it erected next to the machine shed for extra storage. It's a smaller version of this hut, half as wide and half as long."

"I know; we have one full of weapons and ammo. Did he have them install the generator and air filter?"

"They wouldn't take them back so yes, he had no choice."

"It's only money kiddo and you can't take it with you when you go," Marilyn said trying to make Rachel feel better. Rachel still had occasional bouts of depression.

"You should talk; you had a million bucks before the war."

"Those were different times, Rachel," I pointed out. "Before the war, Randy and I were struggling to make it on a quarter section while Mike and you had a half section and Paul and Marilyn had a full section. Look, I know how we did this past year without the bourbon money and the two of you did every bit as well. Money isn't a problem; it's the uncertainty of what's coming next. Will Yellowstone erupt or not? If it does, will it be just a small lava flow or a Supervolcano? The rule has always been to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Those preparations have covered us well, many times."

"I think the main problem is those talking heads on TV," Marilyn grouched. "They don't just report the facts, they speculate endlessly. If I hear one more of them refer to *Supervolcano* or *Dante's Peak*, I think I'm going to be sick."

"They aren't showing a volcano movie tonight for a change," I laughed.

"What are they showing?"

"*Armageddon*."

"Why not *Deep Impact*?"

"That's on CBS; *The Day After Tomorrow* is on ABC."

"Couldn't they show a calming movie, like *Towering Inferno*?"

"That's on USA."

"What's on TNT?"

"Law and Order. SciFi Channel has a Stargate SG-1 Marathon."

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"That's what I mean," Rachel said. "Ever since those earthquakes in California, they've shown nothing but disaster movies on TV and those news idiots are talking like it's the End of Times. Don't they read Revelations, for crying out loud? It's supposed to take

1,000 years!"

"Do I hear an Amen?"

"Amen."

"I'll second that."

o

"Who won?"

"The guys Gunny and Hank picked; field goal with 45 seconds to go."

"June, I'll call you tomorrow, kiddo, maybe we can do some Christmas shopping."

"Thanks, Marilyn."

"Want to watch a movie?"

"Put on CBS, they're showing *Deep Impact*. I like seeing T ea Leoni get drowned by the big wave."

"Ok, I was going to put on *Armageddon* and watch Bruce Willis blow himself up, but it's six of one and a half dozen of the other. Is there coffee?"

"I can make some."

"Nah, I'll have a beer. I was good; I watched 2 football games and didn't have a single drink."

"Rachel is just about been driven nuts by all of the disaster movies on TV."

After the show, we turned in. I got up late, maybe 7am and made a pot of coffee. I took a quick shower while it was dripping. I was just drying off when I heard the NOAA weather radio go off. My hair was wet and I had to finish drying it before I went to find out what was going on. Dan was glued to the TV slopping coffee all over his robe. I got a cup of coffee and joined him, just in time to hear the announcement. It was more about Yellowstone.

"What's going on?"

"They had a steam explosion of some kind."

...a steam explosion rocked Norris Geyser Basin approximately 25 minutes ago. At this time, the alert level remains at orange, but seismologists are studying sensor data to

determine if it's related to the earlier earthquakes or represents a separate event.

Yellowstone Volcano Observatory Scientist-in-Charge Jacob Lowenstern stated that the explosion exceeded the 1989 explosion at Porkchop Geyser in Norris Geyser Basin. Lowenstern also said that the largest hydrothermal-explosion crater documented in the world is along the north edge of Yellowstone Lake in an embayment known as Mary Bay. This 1.5-mile diameter crater formed about 13,800 years ago and may have had several separate explosions in a short time interval.

Lowenstern said the possibility of some kind of eruption is relatively high given the continuing unrest but the possibility of a super volcanic eruption remains remote.

"What would you like for breakfast?"

"I don't know; let me think about it while I get a shower. Man, have I got a headache."

"What kind of a headache?"

"Very strong, unlike anything I've ever experienced on both sides of my head above my ears."

"Come to the kitchen, I want to check you over."

It could be anything from a migraine to a SAH (Subarachnoid hemorrhage); I wanted to check his blood pressure and pupils. If I didn't like what I saw, I'd drive him in town and have him checked over at the hospital. Otherwise, I'd give him a couple of Advil and take away his coffee. It was probably what was called a Thunderclap, generally benign. The classic Subarachnoid Hemorrhage included symptoms of a sudden, severe, and continuous headache, often with nausea, vomiting, meningismus, focal neurologic findings, and loss of consciousness. You really need an MRI as opposed to a CT scan to diagnose one of those. I guess I worry too much; I gave him the Advil and pulled the coffee. He got his shower and made it back to the kitchen for breakfast, so it was probably nothing.

"Decide yet?"

"Do you have any Cream of Wheat or Malt-O-Meal?"

"Yes, both."

"Malt-O-Meal and my coffee back please."

"Is your headache gone?"

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"Yes, thank you."

"It could be just one of those run of the mill – I got out of bed too quickly types of headaches."

"It was a good dream too."

"Was I in it?"

"Nope."

"Careful, you might be lucky to make it to 59."

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I hadn't realized that I left the TV on. Just as we were finishing breakfast...

Standby for an important announcement from the USGS pertaining to the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, which has just issued a change in the alert level.

This is a notice of a red alert level. This alert level is declared by USGS when monitoring and evaluation indicate that precursory events have escalated to the point where a volcanic event with attendant volcanologic or hydrologic hazards threatening to life and property appears imminent or is underway. Depending upon further developments, a "volcano alert" will be maintained, updated, downgraded to a "volcano advisory," or canceled. A "volcano alert" statement will indicate, in as much detail as possible, the time window, place, and expected impact of an anticipated hazardous event. "Updated volcano alert" statements will amplify hazard information as dictated by evolving conditions. Large ash eruptions expected or confirmed. Plume(s) likely to rise above 25,000 feet above sea level. Strong seismic signals have been recorded on all local and commonly on more distant stations.

At 08:35 Mountain time, a M_w 8.3 earthquake shook the area between the Norris Geyser Basin and Hebgen Lake not far from the site of the 1959 quake. Subsequently, a M_w 7.3 quake occurred near the epicenter of the 1975 Norris quake. Early indications are of a continuing seismic wave generated by rising magma, presumed to be rhyolite rather than the more explosive basalt type eruption. However, as a precaution, the USGS in conjunction with local authorities has ordered an evacuation of an area with a 500 mile radius from Yellowstone. The previous caldera forming eruptions were gaseous rhyolite eruptions, while all of the eruptions in the past 150,000 years have been non-gaseous lava flow of thick rhyolite.

To repeat, as a precaution, the USGS in conjunction with local authorities has ordered an evacuation of an area with a 500 mile radius from Yellowstone. Please stay tuned for

further announcements.

"500 miles? It must be serious, June. That write up I read related to the Supervolcano said if it was the big one, it would kill 90% of the people within a 1,000km radius and they're evacuating up to 800 clicks."

"If you recall, a lot of people were trapped in that movie and killed."

"What do you want to do?"

"At the moment, nothing; the pyroclastic flow won't reach this far and we'll have ample warning. We still don't know what kind of eruption to expect. The odds favor a slow lava flow. We probably ought to start converting the milk to cheese. I'd hate to lose it if the damned thing does blow."

"Shouldn't you call Marilyn and Rachel?"

"They have NOAA radios too; every one of the farms has one of those. Besides..."

Ring....ring....ring

"Hi Marilyn, yes we heard both of the announcements. I was expecting your call."

"No, we're going to make cheese, if it does go off, I don't want to lose the milk."

"Sure, and bring Rachel, she's probably ready to explode. I'll give her a Xanax."

"Bye..."

"Is this the way these things always start?"

"I don't know, I've been through the flu pandemic, a pneumonic plague release and WW III, but I've never been through Yellowstone erupting before."

"You know what I mean."

"Yes, and we circle the wagons early."

o

Now get this, Gunny helped Dan move the beer cooler to the barracks. And, Hank had another keg. They said it was for the day room. I thought of Randy, Mike and Paul and how they might have reacted. Yep, probably the same way, but without the smiles.

"Doc, this is June. We're going to button up as soon as we get the announcement that Yellowstone has erupted. Ok, we'll be expecting you."

Meanwhile the communications gear, contents of refrigerators and things we'd need were moved to the barracks. They moved the contents of the freezers and then the freezers themselves to the barracks kitchen. We got Jason, Jr. to monitor the TV while we got organized. This wasn't like the war or anything we had ever experienced; this could last for as long as ten years. I guess you could say we had a lifetime supply of bourbon, but not enough bottles to store it in. It's funny the things you think of when you getting ready for the end of the world, a second time.

Our shelter time would only last until the ash settled, and we would be able to get out and care for the livestock, assuming we could find the barns in the dust cloud. I was still steeling myself for the worst, absent any information to the contrary. During the past 8 years since the war, we'd accumulated a few things that would come in handy, like good respirators with replaceable filters. We'd held back grain, selling only what we needed to and the canned goods deliveries were intended to be delivered over the winter. Did I see the hand of God in our being as prepared as we were? The implication from the Bible was that God helps those that help themselves, as a reward for hard work, not as an invitation to steal.

If Yellowstone did erupt in a Supervolcano, it would change the entire world for many years to come. We wouldn't be worried about the weather; there were enough predictions of what it would be like until the air cleared in the coming decades. Most of the county would be affected and it wouldn't stop at our Naval Blockade, it would encircle the world.

I agreed that a Supervolcano would serve to resolve the climate problems, in time. I also thought that this was the type of event that would entirely change the US, and not for just 3-4 years. In the beginning, we'd be using the weapons in the military equipment hut, but in the end, we'd be farming with horses and possibly using those cowboy guns or even bows and arrows, something we didn't have.

o

It hadn't happened yet, we were thinking in terms of hours, not days. The red alert meant they expected whatever was going to happen to happen within 24 hours. Do you know how long 24 hours can be when you're waiting for the end of the world?

*The minutes seem like hours,
The hours go so slowly,
And still the sky is light . . .
Oh moon, grow bright,
And make this endless day endless night!*

Check that, we don't want an endless night; it would be ash clogging the air.

Each of Yellowstone's explosive caldera forming eruptions occurred when large

volumes of "rhyolitic" magma accumulated at shallow levels in the Earth's crust, as little as 3 miles (5 km) below the surface. This highly viscous (thick and sticky) magma, charged with dissolved gas, then moved upward, stressing the crust and generating earthquakes. As the magma neared the surface and pressure decreased, the expanding gas caused violent explosions. Eruptions of rhyolite have been responsible for forming many of the world's calderas, such as those at Katmai National Park, Alaska, which formed in an eruption in 1912, and at Long Valley, California.

Paula, I'm confused (what's new, Wolf) will it be a basalt eruption or a rhyolite eruption that causes a Supervolcano?

Wolf, he just said rhyolite filled with gas rather than the thinner basalt eruption formed calderas. (Paula Zahn hadn't kept her looks)

"Put the TV on NBC, we don't watch CNN, Jason."

"Yes ma'am."

...news copter is attempting to get closer to Yellowstone, but with the red alert, all aircraft are excluded by a no fly zone. Yellowstone's Scientist-in-Charge Lowenstern said earlier today that despite the red alert they couldn't really predict the size of any possible eruption or whether it would be explosive. On scene reporters tell NBC that there are several vents open now so perhaps the pressure will be lessened and a massive explosion avoided.

"Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky at morning, sailor take warning..."

"Randy used to say that, Dan, but I'm not sure that it applies to volcanoes. I was just thinking about the lyrics from Westside Story. The line from Westside Story says, 'And make this endless day endless night.' That would be a terrible thing, wouldn't it?"

"When Mt. St. Helen's erupted, the eruption began at 8:45 am. At noon, the ash plume (in the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere) had reached Moscow, Idaho. By about 3 pm it was near Missoula, Montana and starting to spread south. By 6 pm it was east of Pocatello, Idaho. At the end of the day, about 16 hours after the eruption started, the ash plume was near central Colorado. Spokane is 200 miles east of the volcano and the ash cloud threw the city into total darkness at midday. Interstate 90 from Seattle to Spokane was closed for a week. Ash removal cost \$2.2 million and took 10 weeks in Yakima."

"What will it be like?"

"It will probably seem like endless night, just like in the song. The ash will be filled with static and we'll be plagued by dry lightning. It will go black and as the air clears, the skies will turn red. I don't know how much ash we'll get, but if we had any crops, they'd be ruined. The good news is that ash will enrich the soil after we get it plowed in."

"What's the weather going to do?"

"According to what I read on Randy's computer June, winter could last for a couple of years. There hasn't been a super volcanic eruption in a long time, so nobody really knows for sure."

"We'd better get some food around, Dan. We'll eat as soon as everyone's finished milking and gets back."

"They're putting up reflectors on stakes every so often so they can find their way to and from the barns. I don't know if that will do any good if the visibility gets low enough."

"HEY EVERYBODY, look at this," Jason shouted.

"What is it?"

"They said they were switching to a satellite feed of Yellowstone. I don't get it, what are those white spots?"

"Those are hot spots, Jason."

"There's another one."

We interrupt the programs in progress for the following announcement. As 17:05 Mountain Standard Time, a massive eruption at Yellowstone began from the area near Hebgen Lake. That was followed by a second eruption in the area of Norris Geyser Basin at 17:23. Satellite imagery indicates a third vent has opened and scientists are in the process of plotting its exact location. It is too early, according to scientists, to measure the amount of ejecta. We will continue broadcasting satellite imagery while it is available.

◦

In volcanology, ejecta consist of particles that came out of a volcanic vent, traveled through the air or under water, and fell back on the ground surface or on the ocean floor. Ejecta can consist of:

- juvenile particles - (fragmented magma and free crystals)
- cognate or accessory particles - older volcanic rocks from the same volcano
- accidental particles - derived from the volcanic basement.

◦

Kearny County is one of the western most Counties in Kansas in the Central Time Zone. The County to the west, Hamilton, is in the Mountain Time Zone. For that reason,

we kept two clocks, one set to Central Time and the other set to Mountain Time. One was labeled Lakin and the other Syracuse.

Local time was ~18:30 and it was already well after sundown. I was thinking to myself, that it was the beginning of an endless night. Dan, Gunny and Hank were explaining the satellite imagery to anyone who had questions and I joined Marilyn to begin a buffet supper. Rachel was totally zoned out from the Xanax.

"I thought she was over the worst of it when Hank and she got married, kiddo, but she really freaked over this Yellowstone thing."

"Doc said to keep her mildly sedated with the Xanax until this thing is over Marilyn. If I don't have to give anyone else the pills, we can keep her out for several months. I hate it, it is just avoiding the inevitable, but it beats her carrying on like it is the end of the world."

"Well isn't it?"

"It may be the end of the world as we know it, but no, I don't think it really is the end of the world. It is just another bump in life's road. I'm afraid we may need climbing gear to get over this one though."

"Yeah, huh? How long until the ash gets here?"

"Dan said Spokane was totally blacked out three hours after Mt. St. Helen's blew in 1980. It traveled 200 miles in 3 hours. I'm guessing that when dawn comes, we'll be in the ash cloud."

"And then what?"

"Face masks when you're outside until the ash clears, keep the smaller children inside, and when it begins to clear, use the pump and hose to wash the ash off the roofs, starting at the bottom and working our way to the top."

"What about growing food?"

"Once they get the ash blended into the soil, the soil will be richer, but I have no idea how long it will be until we have enough sunlight to grow the plants. We can always grow some food in the greenhouse."

"It's going to be hard, huh?"

"Far worse than the war, in my opinion. But, the good news is we've replaced the soil that Mike, Paul and Randy had to get scrapped off the fields."

"I heard that if the ash gets wet, it turns into something like concrete."

"You heard right, Marilyn. A layer of volcanic ash tends to become cemented together to form a solid rock called tuff. The very fine particles may be carried for many miles, settling out as a dust-like layer across the landscape. This is known as an ash fall. The term for any material explosively thrown out from a vent is tephra or pyroclastic debris. They'll have to till the soil quickly before the ash becomes tuff. After the first pass, I'd guess they'd make a second pass and till manure into the soil. Any seed planted in that would grow for sure if there is enough sunlight and water."

"It has been feast or famine since the war."

"We probably won't have to buy mason jars, assuming we could. Before this is over, we should get all of our jars back. Our machinery is starting to wear out and I think we're about to enter into our era of horse farming."

o

"Whoa, it is pitch-black out there. It's just a good thing I strung a rope to the barn."

"How far can you see?"

"About 10'."

"How are they going to get to Marilyn's and Rachel's to milk?"

"They'll have to drive very slowly. Before they come back, they'll have to clean the air filter on the pickup. Don and John are going to Marilyn's to do the milking, Jason and Jim are doing ours and Ray and Hank are going up to Rachel's. They're only going to take one pickup and carry a couple of spare air filters."

"What are they going to do with the milk?"

"Probably dump it, there is no good way to transport it here and we don't have room for all of it."

"It seems like such a waste."

"I suppose they could store it and skim the cream, but they'd have to dump the skim milk."

"It would be great if they could, we could churn butter or something."

Generally cheese was made from whole milk, but we could churn and freeze the butter. I had the storage unit for the FFP and it was only half full, so I could freeze the butter quickly after I vacuum packed it. Hopefully, vacuum packing it would help keeping out the odors. Butter could be stored for up to a year frozen and sharp freezing it was best.

o

I am still a size 4, not bad given my age. It helped me get my man, but he told me rather discreetly that he wouldn't mind it if I didn't remain there. I surprised him and could still wear that red dress that I used to hook him. I had to work at it, gaining weight would have been easy, but I was only a size 5 to begin with. Hard work had slimmed Dan down and it kept me right where I wanted to be. If they got into those 2 kegs of beer they brought for the day room, he'd need bigger jeans again.

Rachel was another issue. Antidepressants aren't addictive, but they do flatten a lot of people. You don't feel depressed, but you don't feel joyful either. They close the amplitude of emotions, so there are no lows or highs. This is why antidepressants were historically reserved for people undergoing major depression. Unfortunately they may promote anxiety. Benzodiazepines, such as diazepam (Valium), chlordiazepoxide HCl (Librium), and alprazolam (Xanax), which can be prescribed to treat anxiety, acute stress reactions, and panic attacks. Benzodiazepines that have a more sedating effect, such as triazolam (Halcion) and estazolam (ProSom) can be prescribed for short-term treatment of sleep disorders.

If it ends in 'am' check to see if it is a benzodiazepine. They can be very addictive. It's one of those *the Devil v. the Deep Blue Sea* issues. Newer anti-anxiety drugs have been introduced, and may be less addictive, but I had alprazolam. Oh well, better living through chemistry. Dr. Timothy Leary was a PhD, not a medical doctor. He was probably more famous for 'Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out'. By the way, LSD is not physically nor psychologically addictive, which is NOT a good reason to try it.

I thought Rachel was concerned about us. She was concerned about all the wildlife that would die. Yellowstone had bison, bear, elk, deer and all manner of wildlife. Directly in the path of the ash lay large herds of just about every kind of wildlife one could imagine including a herd of Bighorn sheep in the Badlands of South Dakota, a huge herd of Elk at Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes, Colorado and other wildlife at other national parks. She should have been an environmentalist.

o

The next morning we woke to the same thing, Yellowstone was still erupting. It had taken 30 minutes for them to get to Rachel and Hank's farm. The milk was placed in the storage tanks on both farms and allowed to separate. That evening, they skimmed the cream, dumped the skim milk and milked again. We spent the entire day churning butter and bagging it as a batch was done. We could freeze it but had no storage space once we did, so instead, we sealed it in vacuum bags and stored it in the refrigerated room where we aged the cheese. We could continue to do this until we ran out of space or could deliver it to Lakin or Garden City.

I would have preferred to find storage for the milk, but we couldn't and this beat just

dumping it. It was Marilyn, Karen, Susan, Sandy, Julia and me doing it; Rachel was totally zonked by the Xanax. Doc's wife, Rose, offered to help, but we suggested she supervise. She had experience churning butter the old fashion way, but we were using a large, powered butter churn, an antique that still worked.

Over the course of the past few years we watched farm auctions, perused want ads and even advertised, slowly accumulating horse drawn equipment. We had an old reaper, that was a big find, and we pulled the chuck wagon in parades. I couldn't recall now who had suggested we get draft horses, Randy probably. We'd started with 12 Clydesdale mares and one stallion, mixing the bloodline with the one free breeding Mike McGilvray included in the deal.

Later on, Marilyn had bought another Clydesdale stallion and we had full herds, nearly 200 Clydesdales and herds of saddle horses numbering close to 70 per farm. We each had about 40 dairy cows, another 60 head of shorthorn breeding cows and between 30 and 40 sows each. It was winter when Yellowstone let loose and what little snow we had soon turned black, buried in ash that was beginning to accumulate.

When it finally did let go, it opened several vents all spewing gaseous rhyolite. So far, they didn't have estimates because it was still erupting. Someone suggested something on the order of 500mi³, but that was at best a guess and would make it nearly as big as the Huckleberry Ridge eruption 2.1 million years ago. I do know that all aviation was grounded until the eruption subsided and the ash cleared from the air.

It was like that until mid-January. Yellowstone, at the time of the eruption was buried in snow, the lowest point in the Park having an elevation of 5,282', Reese Creek, and the highest an elevation of 11,358', Eagle Peak. The TV said it would be months before anyone could say with any degree of certainty how much magma erupted and the size of the new caldera. I can tell you though; it was the first of February before the air in Kansas was clear enough we felt safe spending any time out of the barracks.

We had roughly a foot of ash and Dan, Gunny and Hank got the other men out in early January when the air was still filled with ash and hosed off all the roofs. It puddled there on the ground and mostly turned into a concrete like pile (tuff). The cows were all dry by now, we dried them up to stop throwing the milk away.

It was as cold as I can remember too; 30° below was a common early morning low. The barracks was intended to hold 60 men so there was amply space, but no privacy. We went in before Christmas and didn't stay out until February 1st. The wind turbines had been kept shut down at Ralph's insistence; he said the ash would get into the bearings and ruin them. I was very grateful to have that Gortex parka and leggings.

I think it was just too much for Rachel; Doc had elevated her dosage to Zolof to 200mg. He also kept her on Xanax; it was all he could do. She had clearly reached her breaking point, we all had, but she couldn't adapt. It appeared to me that the duties would fall to Susan and Sandy to keep the Jenkins place running. Rachel was one of the uncounted

casualties of the Yellowstone Supervolcano that the Seismologists and Geologists said couldn't happen again.

"We've got a major problem," Dan observed.

"What was your first clue?"

"You don't understand, June, the temperature is well below zero, the fields are covered with nearly a foot of ash and the ground is frozen so hard I'm afraid the ash will turn into tuff before we can get it plowed in and blended with the soil."

"Do you think it will warm up enough so we can grow crops this year?"

"I don't know, but I doubt it. What year was that, 1816, when they had that volcanic explosion that caused the year without summer?"

"Yes, the 1815 eruption of Mt. Tambora in Indonesia caused 1816 not to warm up."

"How big of an eruption was that?"

"12mi³, I see what you mean, no summer for a few years."

"I hope that we don't end up having to slaughter the livestock due to lack of feed."

"How much do we have?"

"Enough for 2 or 3 years so unless we can get a crop by then, we're up to our butts in alligators."

"If we have to do anything, we can start by not breeding the livestock. With the slaughtering we do and attrition, we can cut the herds of cattle and hogs."

"That might stretch the feed for another few months, is all."

"Did you figure on the soybean meal and corn we have stored?"

"Yes, I'd give us 40 months tops. It won't stop here, you know, this will affect the entire world and it will be a minimum of 10 years before all of the ash is out of the air."

"Dan, we have a greenhouse and a source of power. We can use grow lights if need be, but we can grow enough food to keep us going."

"Did you see the sunrise? It was very red; there is a lot of ash and gas in the air."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 17

June understood our situation, but I wondered if she realized how desperate it could get. We'd have to plow all of the land to incorporate the volcanic ash. And then, after it was disked, we probably have to run a rototiller over it a couple of times and try to blend the soil until the top foot or so was a homogenous mix of soil and ash. I had no idea what effect that would have on the soil and I wasn't certain that anyone really knew. We had a large supply of manure we could mix in and create humus, but it wasn't going to happen overnight. We'd probably just seed everything with grasses for the next 2 to 3 years and harvest what little crop we got from the sun.

"Gunny, I haven't been this cold since I was stationed in Alaska."

"Yeah, I think it met the witch that this belongs to once."

"How's Hank doing?"

"They got the house cleaned up and Rachel moved back in, but he says she doesn't seem to have much of a will to live."

"June says Rachel reached her final breaking point and may never get over this."

"As soon as the ground thaws, we're going to have to plow in that ash, disc and rototill in the manure. We should check around and see if anyone has any extra grain they'd be willing to sell; it's going to be a while before we can grow anything but grass."

"That's what I was thinking, Gunny, we have to incorporate the ash as soon as possible. Do you think we can find grain?"

"I'd expect some farmer's to just give up. They'll sell off their livestock and the grain and hay will go on a first come-first served basis. We have one advantage, we can pay gold. Paul left Marilyn very well off and we've added a bit in the good years."

"Randy had an insurance policy that paid their entire section off, and June had some and a lot more now."

"We can ask the Sheriff who is giving up, he should have a good idea who it might be. We aren't going to have any milk until the cows calve either. It's a bad time to be a farmer."

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We bought several thousand bushels of corn and oats and several semi loads of hay. We found some of those Brock (Butler got out of the granary business in '97) granaries and bought up all the soybeans we could find. Gunny had it right; farmers who couldn't grow crops couldn't make their loan payments and would end up losing their land to the

bank or lending agency. The hay might lose some nutritional value, but it would provide bulk in the animals' diets and we could grind feed. Planting grass would create pasture that we could use to feed the livestock during warm weather. It didn't appear that we'd have to suspend the breeding programs at all. March came in like a lion and left the same way. In April it began to warm a little and the ground began thawing.

It was very difficult plowing in the ash and I suspected that Randy's old Ford tractor was all but done by the end of the plowing. I don't know, but I suspect the ash worked its way into the engine and despite frequent oil changes and new air filters, it continued to lose power. The Massey still ran well and I wanted to save it for the coming years. It was far harder to find parts for it but it was a more powerful tractor than the old Ford. We could continue to extract the oil from the soybeans and produce biodiesel until we ran out of soybeans.

It wouldn't mean a whole lot if the sun didn't shine. There was general agreement that if we grew grass only and plowed it under each fall, when the sun did shine, the soil would grow good crops. We spent money, but it was an investment in our future. A future we wouldn't have without planning ahead. The preparations Marilyn, Rachel and June made were for our short-term survival, however, and in the aftermath of this tragedy, everything had to be for the very long-term.

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We got the tax returns done and took them to the post office. After that, it was the government's problem. We paid by check and I put just enough back in the bank to cover those 2 checks, I expected it to be a cash and carry economy for the near term. Six of the dairy cows were getting too old and I planned to send them to the locker plant with our beef to turn that tallow into 10% ground beef. I always had a few yearling heifers ready to take the place of the older cows. You could figure about 6 years, on average, for dairy cows and twice as long for feeder cows. The average dairy cow produced about 18,000 to 28,000 pounds of milk per year over her lifetime. I guess it wore them out producing milk. They didn't have any fat on their bodies when they were butchered.

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That ash cut the shares and moldboards up pretty good. For a farmer to be able to plant different crops on his land, it is first necessary to eliminate the natural vegetation. This is initially accomplished through the use of a moldboard plow. The moldboard plow has one or more metal shares which cut into the ground, and overturn the surface vegetation. This action exposes the underlying layer of soil humus, and begins the decomposition of the overturned plant material. Moldboard plows are inherently required on unbroken land, for without one, a farmer would not be able to plant a viable crop on his land. The competition from the undesired natural vegetation would starve the crop for necessary nutrients, and as a result the yield of the farmer's crop would be drastically reduced. The plowing process often times occurs twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. While spring plowing is accomplished to break up the soil for spring

planting, fall plowing is usually done to destroy plant diseases and insects that use the previous year's crop as their sustenance.

After a field has been plowed, it still needs to be smoothed out and leveled before it can be planted. With two gangs of individual round disks, a disk harrow chops the sod furrows into smaller pieces. This further damages the original vegetation's root system, and begins to level the field for planting. Depending on the type of sod and plant root system, it may take several passes by a disk harrow before a field is smooth and level enough to be planted. The disk may be followed by a drag harrow to further break up the soil.

Once a field has been adequately leveled, and the sod has been broken into small enough pieces (or the rocks have been removed as the case may be), it is ready to be planted by the farmer. The type of implement that a farmer uses to plant the field depends directly on the type of crop he is going to plant. If the farmer has decided that he wishes to plant a grain of some sort on his land, the implement that he would choose is the grain drill. A grain drill has a series of individual round disk openers which carve out a small trench for the grain seed to be dropped into. As the wheels rotate, seed is augured from the seed hopper, through the seed tubes, and into the small trench. Round trace chains or spike-toothed drags follow the disk openers, fill in the small trenches, and bury the seed in the soil.

After the grain has reached maturity in the late summer, it needs to be harvested so that it can be sold by the farmer. There are several implements that can be used to harvest grain, one of which is a grain binder. Typically, grain binders were most common in the humid Midwest where the grain dried unevenly, and it was necessary to have additional drying before it was threshed. Early grain binders were all ground-driven and pulled by a team of horses around the field.

As the horses pulled the grain binder forward, the driving wheel was rotated, which powered the sickle and reel of the grain binder. As the reel rotated, it bent the grain stalks inward towards the sickle, and the sickle cut the grain stalks off a few inches above the ground. A cloth canvas then conveyed the grain to a gear driven knotter which tied several stalks together into a small bundle. After the grain bundle was tied, it slid onto the bundle carrier, and was dropped onto the field. Following close behind, field workers picked up the tied grain bundles and placed several of them together to form a small tipi, which was called a "shock." The grain bundles were placed in shocks so that the unripened grain would have a chance to dry, and so that they would easily shed water if they were rained on.

A grain header was another implement that a farmer had the option of using when harvesting grain. Typically, headers were most common in semi-arid grain-growing regions where the grain ripened and dried more evenly in the field. Essentially, grain headers functioned in the same way as grain binders except that they lacked a knotter mechanism to tie the grain stalks into bundles, and they were usually pushed instead of pulled by a team of horses.

Precisely like a grain binder, as the horses pushed the grain header forward, the driving wheel was rotated, which powered the sickle and the reel. As the reel rotated, it bent the grain stalks inward towards the sickle, and the sickle cut them off several inches above the ground. A cloth canvas then conveyed the cut grain up an incline and into an open sided wagon which was trailing alongside. By eliminating the shocking process, grain headers drastically increased the efficiency of grain harvesting, but they could only be used in semi-arid areas where the grain ripened more evenly.

After the grain had ripened sufficiently in the shocks, it was ready to be threshed so that the farmer could sell it. The threshing process, where grain was removed from the stalks, was accomplished through the use of a threshing machine. Large farmers usually owned their own threshing machines, but many times farmers depended on custom threshermen to do the threshing for them. Regardless of machine ownership, however, the threshing process required a huge amount of labor. Each member of the threshing crew had a specific job to accomplish when the threshing rig arrived.

The steam engine set it up in a location close to the grain field, or where the farmer wished to have the straw blown. Next, the steam engine was belted up to the threshing machine, and all the pre-threshing maintenance was completed on the threshing machine. Concurrently and after the threshing machine was started, a team of workers called "bundle haulers" went out into the field and loaded shocks onto a horse-drawn wagon. After the wagon was filled, the bundle haulers then brought it up to the spot where the threshing machine was set up.

Soon the threshing machine was started, and men standing on top of the wagon pitched down the grain bundles into the threshing machine's bundle feeder. The conveying chain of the bundle feeder then transported the grain bundles into the threshing machine cylinder where most of the grain was separated from the stalks. The separated grain fell to the bottom of the threshing machine, while chaff and dust was removed by a fan as it descended. An elevator on the threshing machine then transported the loose grain into a grain wagon parked nearby or into individual bags, depending on the method that the farmer preferred.

After the straw went through the cylinder, it was continually battered as it progressed along, ensuring that all the grain was removed from the stalks. At the rear of the threshing machine, after the straw had passed over the straw walkers, it was deposited in a fan housing which propelled the straw through the blower and into the straw stack. This series of machine processes was repeated continuously, until all of the farmer's grain was threshed. Overall, while there definitely was an immense amount of labor involved in the use of a threshing machine, it drastically improved the efficiency and capacity of the threshing process over previous methods.

The threshing machine has given way to the combine, usually a self-propelled unit that either picks up windrowed grain or cuts and threshes it in one step. The grain binder has been replaced by the swather, which cuts the grain and lays it on the ground in

windrows, allowing it to dry before being harvested by a combine. Plows are not used nearly as extensively as before, due in large part to the popularity of minimum tillage to reduce soil erosion and conserve moisture. The disk harrow today is more often used after harvesting to cut up the grain stubble left in the field. Although seed drills are still used, the air seeder is becoming more popular with farmers. Today's farm machinery allows farmers to cultivate many more acres of land than at the time the images in these collections were taken. As of 1998, the average North Dakota farm was about 1,300 acres compared to 460 acres in 1920, and the number of farms had dropped from almost 78,000 in 1920 to a little under 30,000 today.

Depending on how long our powered machinery lasted, what I just described was how we would be farming in the years to come. We already use horses to pull wagons instead of a tractor and had for some time. Those Clydesdales had to earn their keep and we had to keep their training sharp. It was just a shame we didn't have a beer wagon to pull in the parades. Anheuser-Busch would eat their hearts out at our herds of Clydesdales. I thought Ray's beer was better than theirs. Adolphus Busch had transformed his father-in-law's (Eberhard Anheuser's) once-failing brewery into a grand empire.

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To get back to what I was saying, that ash first scoured the plowshares and moldboards and then began to cut into them. You don't generally wear out moldboards on a plow; rather you periodically have to replace the shares. They carry parts for most brands of plows and the parts are made in Perry, IA. I wonder if Perry is still there. It's probably under at least as much ash as our part of the Country.

The main problem with a moldboard plow was the depth you got, about 10". The moldboard rolled the soil over on top of the ash and that sent the ash flying. I suppose that's why the old Ford tractor was wearing out, ingesting too much ash into its engine. I didn't figure it would hurt the tranny or rear end and I had a set of sleeves, rings and pistons for the tractor. Who knows, I might be able to get it overhauled one more time, but after plowing 630 acres, that old tractor gave up the ghost.

"Do we still have parts for the Ford?" June asked.

"I have the parts that Randy had sleeves, rings and pistons."

"We'll have to haul it to town, Randy never gave up on that tractor and neither will I."

"Could you call the dealer and have him pick it up? I'm going to use the Massey and disk the field."

"Where are the parts?"

"In the machine shed, right where, I presume, Randy left them. I plumb wore the plow out; it's going to need new shares and moldboards. I have Randy's catalog, they're

available from Perry, Iowa."

"What did that?"

"The ash, I guess. After I disk, I think I'll hook up a team and use it to pull the rake."

"Are you going to plant?"

"Just grass, any food we get will have to come out of the greenhouse. For a clear day, it's very dark."

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I called the dealer Dan suggested. The dealer said he could fix it, but he didn't have any parts. I told him we had sleeves, rings, pistons and probably a few sets of glow plugs. Were those pistons with or without wrist pins and connecting rods, he asked. I didn't really know. Did I have a set of crankcase bearings? I told him I'd have to call him back and asked if I had the parts could he rebuild the motor. 'Maybe' he said. 'Thank you', I said and hung up. Randy had a factory repair manual, he'd probably want to borrow that, too! Plus he'd probably want \$50 an hour for his labor. I dug around and found the invoice from the dealer who repaired the Ford last time; it was a different guy than the one I called.

"Can you repair a Ford tractor?"

"We've done a few, but we only have a few parts, what's wrong with it?"

"The engine died, probably eaten up by the ash, according to my husband."

"I have some parts, but not a lot."

"I have pistons, rings, sleeves and glow plugs, for sure. Other than that, I don't know what parts we have."

"That's enough; want us to pick it up?"

"You repaired it the last time, Randy Webster, do you remember where that is?"

"Randy Webster? I thought he got killed right after we repaired the tractor."

"I remarried, same farm though."

"I know where it is, we'll pick it up this afternoon, ok?"

I'll have to tell you, I felt much better now. This guy was good and the tranny and rear end were still as good as the day they brought the tractor back. The guy had standard

labor charges, too, so it didn't appear I'd get ripped off. I'd traded off Randy's rifle to Marilyn to get Dan that Super Match and Dan frequently carried Randy's H&K pistol. That was just fine, but the old Ford tractor being worn out wasn't. We didn't have many parts for the Massey, so it was just as well Dan wore out the Ford doing the dirty work. And now that I knew I could get it fixed, I really did feel much better. Maybe I ought to make a nice lunch. Or, maybe not. He didn't know who to call to get the Ford fixed.

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"What's for lunch?"

"Peanut butter sandwiches, the bread and peanut butter are on the counter, make it how it suits you."

"Did I do something wrong?"

"Yes, but I fixed it. The guy who is going to repair the Ford is coming by this afternoon to pick it up."

"Did you call the dealer I suggested?"

"Yes, and all he could supply was labor. I found the invoice for the guy who repaired it the last time and he said we had more than enough parts. There's soup on the stove."

"Whatever I did wrong, I'm sorry, June."

"I figured you would be; that's why I heated up soup for you."

"I appreciate it, it's cold out today. I don't think it's up to 50°."

"Whatever happened to that revenuer?"

"I don't know honey; he probably headed for the east coast when it looked like Yellowstone was going to blow up. I was afraid I was going to have to move the stills and the bourbon barrels. I guess we indirectly saved by the volcano."

"I think I know where they buried the FEMA guys."

"What FEMA guys?"

"Our late husbands' got roadblock duty for the Sheriff one time. That was back when FEMA was just starting to raise hell. Anyway, 2 guys with FEMA came to Lakin for a meeting and then returned to Garden City. They later found their vehicle about 2 miles past the County line, but never found the men. I suspect the men are buried on our farm, but I don't really know."

"I've only plowed about 10" deep; I don't think that would turn up the bodies."

"I'm sure if they're here, they're probably buried deep. They bought those H&K USP Tactical's and suppressors down in Oklahoma, not long before those guys disappeared."

"How did they manage that?"

"Gold talks. They got 3 pistols and 10 of those M4-FA suppressors for the M16A4s that they liberated from Leoti."

"I was wondering where they came from."

"Randy never did get his H&K UMP 45. But they did come up with 2 of the MP5K-PDWs about the time those FEMA guys disappeared."

"Where are they?"

"In the gun case, I never cared for them, they're 9mm."

"DHS ICE bought the models selected after an exhaustive and punishing battery of testing the USP Compact LEM, the P2000 and the P2000SK subcompact. Each of the three models was chosen in calibers 9x19mm, .40 S&W, and .357 SIG, and employ HK's innovative LEM trigger system."

"What's ICE?"

"Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

"Well, that's what the goons had when they showed up in Garden City. Say, are your boys going to stay here or go back to Garden City to their jobs?"

"They're still talking it over, June. Dan wants to stay and Jeremy wants to return to work."

"If they stay, I'm certain the Sheriff would be more than happy to have them as Reserve Deputies. As far as I'm concerned, they're as much a part of this family as Jim and Mary, so we'll just divide things up differently."

"That might just be what it takes to get them to stay. Of course finding something better for them than a singlewide would help too."

"Would doublewides do?"

"I'll ask, it just might."

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As far as I was concerned, I hoped the boys would stay. We'd no doubt end up supplying them food and the idea of having a couple of former fulltime police officers here appealed to me. In my mind's eye I could see things getting much worse before they got better. How much food could we grow in the greenhouse, even with grow lights? If we could keep it warm enough, we could probably grow year round. It had started out so simple in 2006. Now, the place looked like a combination of I don't know what. Cheese cellars, barracks, food warehouse and weapons storage all crowded in the same 10 acres that were the original homestead. On top of that, we had the 2mw wind turbine and our two 10kw turbines.

Marilyn had 2 warehouse sized Quonset huts for the canning operation with one holding our supply of accumulated pint and quart jars and several thousand lids plus her cheese cellar. Hank had his cheese cellar and that above ground shelter. I say Hank because at the moment my friend Rachel could barely manage her personal needs, bathing and spent most of her time staring off into space looking for answers. Perhaps in time, she's slowly come out of it, I had my fingers crossed, but I had little hope of that happening right away.

Resiliency took different forms in the 3 of us, I went to school, Marilyn went looking for a Marine and Rachel developed depression. Eventually, with medication and therapy she came out of it and met and married Hank. It appeared she was going to be ok; she managed the garden operation through the summer without a hitch. If anyone had an easy summer, it was me. Talk about luck, we'd hired mercenaries as a security force and had managed to repel the single attack that came with only one fatality. Even Dragon Skin won't protect you against bullet between the eyes. Jim, it seems was waiting for FEMA to show up, he had a score to settle and only he knew what it was all about.

In a hotly contested election, we'd managed to elect a one-term Libertarian who wasn't that different from the others. He made lots of promises, but once he was sworn in, the realities of the job embraced him and few of his campaign promises were fulfilled. The current President was a moderate and could have been either a Democrat or a Republican; there wasn't much difference in the moderate group.

We hadn't totally recovered from the war nearly 9 years later and now the skies were gray during the day and red at sunrise and sunset. Our 4th of July picnic was held in the dining room of the barracks, it was only in the low '60s outside. The grass was slow coming up and we couldn't use it for pasture this year. We did have a bit of luck; one of the farmer's calling it quits raised Black Angus. We combined resources and bought his herd and sold off all of our mature beef cattle. Food prices were through the roof but beef prices were in the toilet.

The National Weather Service has issued a long term forecast reflecting the changes cause by the eruption of Yellowstone. The eruption, which is now estimated to have ejected ~350mi³ of ash, was slightly larger in volume than the Lava Creek eruption of

640,000 years ago, but not as large as the Huckleberry Ridge eruption of 2.1 million years ago.

Forecasts indicate a slow clearing of the ash from the air over a period of 8-10 years and an even longer of period of clearing for the sulfuric gases in the upper atmosphere, anywhere from 20 to 50 years. The overall effect of these changes is to halt the global warming now attributed in most part to the second industrial revolution and the use of hydrocarbons.

The most dramatic effect of the eruption has been on agriculture, with only the southern tier of states capable of producing anything resembling a normal crop. Overall, agricultural production has fallen by at least 80%. Early indications of the problems with agriculture are reflected in the glut of beef and pork in the marketplace, forcing prices sharply lower. Many fear that this substantial reduction of herds will later be reflected in beef and pork shortages.

Evacuations from the general area of pyroclastic flows were moderately successful given the relatively low population of the severely affected area. With the high level of winds in the jet stream, ash was deposited as far east as Indiana in measurable amounts affecting agriculture.

Further early indications of the scope of the problems related to last December's eruption is the total inability of federal and state officials to respond, finding them clearly overwhelmed. Damage estimates are in the hundreds of billions of dollars and may easily pass the one trillion dollar mark. Cleanup efforts have been hampered by the weather, the extent of the ensuing damage and a general lack of funds.

In local news...

"So, I suppose that means we won't be getting any Wyoming coal?"

"I checked Dan; coal is available from eastern mines and is costly. It's hard coal, hence has more BTU's per ton, but the price increase is disproportional to the increase in energy. I went ahead and ordered for the farm but we may end up burning wood before this thing is over."

"Is firewood available or are we going to have to harvest our own?"

"You'd better sharpen the chain on your saw."

"I don't think so, June; I'm not as young as I once was. This is going to be work for the younger men. Ray, Don, Jim, John and Jason can do the wood harvest and we older retired types will stay home and do the chores."

"They called, the Ford is finally done, and it will be delivered tomorrow."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 18

"Where is that coal from?" Dan asked.

"Pennsylvania. He said that he'd be getting some West Virginia coal later but it wouldn't be any cheaper. Wyoming was the largest producer of coal following by West Virginia. I'd imagine that coal will be expensive for some time to come."

"Just so you know the boys finally made up their minds to stay on permanently. What are we going to do about getting those doublewides?"

"Maybe we could get some from Texas; they build nice homes down there. They are insulated against the heat so they should do well in a cold environment."

"Where did you get the singlewides?"

"Garden City."

"I'll look there first and this one is on me. I think I have enough money left to pay cash for 2."

"Don't worry about it Dan, I'll get the contractor started putting in the basements if you'll show me where you want them."

"Anywhere near a good well. What's available?"

"Here at the main homestead, near Jason, Jim or John and where Tom built."

"The main well is here, so how about putting their homes along the road on one side of us?"

"Great I'll call the contractor and you can show him where to put the basements. I recommend the usual setup with wood-coal furnaces and standby generators."

"What fuel source would you recommend for the generators?"

"Dan, it's going to depend on what you can find available but either propane or diesel. Propane would be my first choice, but who really knows what energy sources will be available in the coming years. Just make sure that whatever you buy for them is very well insulated, at least R-19 walls and R-40 overhead. If you can get optional storm windows or triple glazed windows, you'd be better off."

Dan headed for town and I drove over to visit Mary and Julia who were both at Julia's today. We had waited to fill the gasoline tank until it was empty and ordered 150 gallons of unleaded gasoline. To this we added 850 gallons of anhydrous ethanol, blending the two as the tank was filled. Gasoline was actually easier to get than E85 because etha-

nol was in very short supply. We had plenty of grain and Jim had produced the 850 gallons of anhydrous especially to mix with the gas. Since the war, the food situation around the US had been a roller coaster ride, fat in some years and lean in the majority. This latest calamity just made the situation far worse than it already was, ethanol for fuel, now a mainstay, was virtually unavailable. I think maybe that's why the fellas bought all of the extra grain and the granaries when they had the chance; we were energy independent except for the propane. And while the price had jumped dramatically on propane, it remained available.

I made sure the girls were well stocked on supplies and put together a small list of things to send back with the boys. Coffee was running about \$14 a can, when you could get it, the climate in South America was absolutely awful and of course Folgers had to close the Gulf Coast processing plant because it was under water now. When it was available in the stores, we bought all they would sell us, 20 cases of the 57oz. cans, processed in Kansas City. I'm sure you know about the law of supply and demand and the demand for something like coffee was high, the supply short and it was reflected by the price. That was one of the reasons our three farms were blessed, we had lots of storage space for hard to find items and because of our continued growth in spite of the battle with nature, why we had ample supplies of that yellow metal it took to get what we wanted.

My grandmother lived during the *Great Depression* of the last century and from stories she told about the difficulty they had getting things, things were the same now or worse. My late husband was more of a historian than I was and he had all the information on the computer that Dan used to anticipate what the future held in terms of farming. Right now, we weren't any better off than the people who lived in cities; we couldn't grow anything except food in the greenhouse. That greenhouse had been one of the best investments we'd ever made. Now, we scrambled to get a large enough supply of cool white and warm white 4' fluorescent bulbs to keep plants growing year round and had installed a heater to warm the greenhouse through the winter.

It was becoming all too clear what it took to survive long duration calamities: a constant source of power, shelter from the environment, a means to produce food no matter the circumstance and a means of protection. A person needed at least advanced first aid training to deal with life's little emergencies too. Few people had what I had in my basement, but that little clinic was the primary source of medical care for a significant group of people, 3 families plus.

As we worked our way through this past summer (2018), it became all too clear that labor was going to be a prized commodity in the coming days and Gunny and Marilyn took those singlewides off our hands and hired two young couples to provide the extra labor they needed on their farm. Hank had hired a live-in housekeeper to help Rachel and he too had added a pair of hired hands.

Overall, Hank had himself, Ray and the two hired men to work a section, Gunny had himself, Don and two hired hands for their section and we had Ralph on the turbine,

Dan, Jim, John and Jason for our section. Hank's housekeeper, Helen, was a divorcee with one child, a boy, Ronald. The best way to describe Rachel's condition was slightly improved.

◦

We had what you could have called a summer, the days got longer and then reversed, but we didn't have a growing season. Not the first time, but surely the worst since who knows when. Periodic weather reports seemed to show that nature was reversing herself, very slowly. We were told to expect a slightly warmer summer this coming year with highs in our area in the low 70s. I think I'd describe it as Canada taking a vacation 1,000 miles south. The boys and I worked outside every day, usually with a light jacket, trying to remove the ash from nearly everything on the farm. The particles were so small, perhaps on the order of 0.1mm, and invasive, as in everywhere. The jet stream took a turn to the south and we were hit pretty badly. Labor Day, the first Monday in September, was only slightly above freezing and we all got together in the barracks building for what was usually an outdoor picnic.

◦

"I just cleaned this place last week and everything is gritty, are we still getting ash?"

"I know what you mean, June, the furniture is practically ruined. I spray on pledge after I vacuum the tables off and they still scratch. Deke says we're probably going to have to replace most of the windows because they're getting frosted."

"Rachel, how are you feeling now?"

"A little better, I went into Lakin and got my hair done. Just a little pick me up, you know. I got tired of brushing it and had Sally cut it into a pageboy flip."

"Hey kiddo, I hear some new blond jokes."

◦

SHE WAS SO BLONDE THAT...

She sent me a fax with a stamp on it.

She thought a quarterback was a refund.

She tripped over the cordless phone.

At the bottom of the application where it says "sign here," she put Sagittarius.

If she spoke her mind, she'd be speechless.

When she heard that 90% of all crimes were committed around the home, she moved.

It took her months to figure out she could use her AM radio at night.

She was staring at the frozen orange juice because it said "concentrate"

She thinks Taco Bell is a Mexican Phone Company.

She told me to meet her at the corner of WALK & DON'T WALK.
When she was on the highway going to the airport and saw a sign that said "Airport Left," she turned around & went home.
She put lipstick on her forehead because she wanted to make up her mind.
Under education on her job application, she put "Hooked on Phonics."
She studied for a blood test and failed.
She thought Boyz II Men was a daycare center.
It takes her two hours to watch 60 Minutes.
She sold her car so she would have gas money.
She looked into a box of Cheerio's and said, "OH, LOOK!! Donut seeds!!"
She had to leave her job at the pharmacy because she couldn't fit the prescription bottle in the typewriter.
What's the definition of "eternity?" 4 blondes at a 4-way stop
What do you call five blondes at the bottom of the ocean? An air pocket.
What do you call a basement full of blondes? A whine cellar.
Why do blondes have TGIF on their shirts? "This goes in front."
Why did the blonde nurse bring a red marker to work? She thought she'd have to draw blood.

Is it possible for hair to turn white overnight? (Only if you add shoe polish to it.)

o

The pageboy was popular during the '60s, if you can't recall. The bottom of the hair curled in or with the flip, curled out. If Rachel was happy wearing a hairstyle that was so out of date it might start a trend, what did I care? Anything to improve her mood, but you know, the eruption could be indirectly responsible because the sun didn't shine through as much and when it's gloomy outside, people feel gloomy inside, which probably explained why they drank so much coffee in Seattle.

Before Seattle had been destroyed, the first time, people in Seattle were heavy coffee drinkers and it was frequently overcast. Not that Seattle got as much rain, as say New York, but it drizzled and the percentage of cloudy days was very high. Starbucks wasn't the only custom coffee roaster in Seattle in those days and there was plenty of market to go around.

Mt. Rainier was a topic of interest because of its proximity to Seattle and the fact that it was venting steam melting the glaciers and creating lahars. It had something like 25 glaciers that could be melted off. At least that's what we'd heard earlier on the news. With our immediate concerns in southwestern Kansas, Seattle didn't really interest us, what was there to save? The Chinese hit the Puget Sound area with at least 3 nukes in '09, the Navy ports were there and Boeing. Then more recently in the midst of rebuilding, the faults let loose basically destroying what was left of San Francisco and the coasts of Washington and Oregon. I think I covered this, right?

Marilyn had started off the Labor Day party with some blond jokes and some of the fel-

las nodded as if they knew something about the subject. I don't see why we're celebrating Labor Day anyway, aside from turning the ash over and getting the soil back to near usable condition, they hadn't done much but chores and the occasional batch of bio-diesel. Dan said the previous year since he was going to attract attention anyway, he'd buy 96 barrels so you know what they were doing with some of the wheat, barley and corn besides making anhydrous for E85. Anything that contains sugar or starch can be converted to alcohol. Milk pickups had resumed and the cows had calved and we were back to selling milk, pork and beef. Conversely we had no food to sell besides the meat. We were cracking and freezing eggs, just in case.

By now you should have figured out that we butchered 19 of the dairy cows and several of the shorthorns. What meat we couldn't keep went to Lakin making the locals very happy. Kansas is wheat Country so they had bread and meat and if they had veggies, they were homegrown. Based on the jars we were recovering, they still had pickles or the smaller jars of veggies. When it came time to bottle the bourbon, we had the 12 barrels from 5 years back, but it wasn't selling so well because of the price.

The USDA recommends at least 4 serving of beans of any kind, weekly. It lowers the risk of colon cancer or something. So, we traded beans, and wheat to the grocery stores for coffee, toilet paper, pads and personal care items like toothpaste. We'd harvested about 5 tons of pinto beans the previous summer of '17 when all the crops were high yielding. This wouldn't last forever, so we refused to discount the bourbon.

About mid-September it really began to get cold. We bred the new herds of Angus cattle and continued to market the shorthorns as they approached market weight. The pork was at market weight and we ran in over 300 head to Garden City to Tyson. We also took a truck load to the locker to be butchered, cut and wrapped. It was 10° below zero on October 1st.

Out came the Cats and sleds for transportation. There wasn't enough snow on the road, according to Dan, to justify firing up the snow blower. Between Labor Day and the cold snap, they harvested all the firewood they could get, using teams to drag the logs back to the farms. Finally Dan cut a one lane path between all of the farms but didn't bother to open the road to town.

"Baby, it cold outside."

"I noticed, I get cold just looking out the windows. The ice took the phone lines down again, so we'll be on radio until spring when they repair the lines. How much bourbon did you make this year?"

"36 barrels. That leaves me 24 for next year's batch. If I can get another dozen, we'll do 36 then too."

"Don't you think you're going overboard? We only sold 6 barrels worth or 90 cases. With our hold back from previous years, we could float a small ship with our bourbon supply."

"But June, it isn't always going to be as bad as it is now. Once agricultural production resumes, people will have money in their pockets and we'll have the inventory to meet the demand.

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You figure it out, 6 barrels = 90 cases sold, 12 barrels = 180 cases sold and 24 barrels = 360 cases. At a production level of 36 barrels, we were producing 540 cases (6,480 bottles) for market and our reserve would increase from 4 and a fraction cases to 22 cases per season. Well, it gave me time to paint a sign that said, "Arrest Us, We're Stupid." If the ATF stayed away, we'd be ok. Otherwise...

I had noticed that Hank had taken a case of the bourbon home and began to wonder if Rachel hadn't found a new friend to further mellow her depression. Most alcoholics suffer from depression and alcohol is a depressant. Plus if Doc was keeping her on Xanax, we could have a problem in the making.

"Dan, will you do something for me?"

"What is it honey?"

"Check with Hank and find out who the bourbon was for. I'm concerned that Rachel may be drinking."

"And, if she is?"

"We have a problem. Doc is either going to have to get her off the Xanax or the alcohol. Both are sedative hypnotic drugs and they're synergistic. It's a case where $1 + 1 = 10$."

"I'll see him tomorrow and work the conversation in that direction."

"Oh, what are you doing tomorrow?"

"Cutting the logs to firewood length and splitting them."

"Don't make a big deal about it; simply find out if she's drinking. Ray makes the high octane beer and she could be drinking it too."

"Was she drinking on Labor Day?"

"Not any more than the rest of us, but that doesn't really mean anything."

"I'll check, but give me a day or so to find out."

"How about steak, baked potato and fresh lettuce salad for supper?"

"Where did you get the lettuce?"

"From the greenhouse. We should have been doing that all along. At least I can keep us all in fresh vegetables."

"Mushrooms?"

"Canned, but I'll fix some."

"I wonder what the folks in Lakin are having for supper."

"Probably beans, rice and bread. I don't see why the town doesn't use that greenhouse to grow vegetables all year long."

"Has anyone suggested it?"

"I haven't, but I haven't been to town recently."

"You're buddies with the Sheriff, June, give him a call and suggest it."

"I'll get on the radio later. I wonder how they're making out in Lakin and Garden City."

"Surely by now the government has managed to do something."

"Have you heard gunshots? If not, they haven't showed up. Feelings still run deep over, well you know."

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We were lucky so far, we'd been on the wind turbine continually since Ralph started it back up. Dan had left one of his concerns unspoken, what Jim would do if the feds did show up. After the Massacre, the National Guard troops had gathered up all of the weapons and those belonging to the members of the Kearny County Sheriff's Department members were returned to the families or the County. The FEMA weapons, those MP5K-PDWs and the handguns were divided up among the Kearny, and Finney County Sheriff's Department's and the City of Garden City. When Marilyn, Rachel and I were deputized, we were offered FEMA weapons, but declined, we couldn't bear the thought that we might end up with the very weapons that had killed our husbands.

The new Sheriff later thought better of his decision and recalled the weapons anyway. I couldn't print LEO training certificates for the younger men, not with the school having been destroyed when they were kids, so this younger generation didn't end up being Reserve Deputies, yet. We were nearing the age where we'd have to turn in those badges, too, age 60 was the limit imposed by the Sheriff. All hope wasn't lost, we had Jason and Ray, Dan and Jeremy with badges and they were fairly young.

The problem wasn't so much the snow as it was the cold. It was 25° below zero on Thanksgiving and by January, at least 10° colder. We sold most of our milk; it was our part in helping out. We had several hundred pounds of frozen butter and plenty of cheese and that went too. The two counties had plenty of wheat for bread, small amounts of meat, and even some rice from Arkansas. They weren't growing beans in North and South Dakota this year; I can assure you of that.

Fuel supplies had been good when the farms were producing corn but now there was little E85 to be found. Dan, Gunny, Hank and Jason produced a few batches of bio-diesel to help the town out, even giving them a price break and selling it for \$6 a gallon.

"Hi Sheriff, come in, I'll get you some coffee."

"Thanks, June. It's so cold out I'm going to turn into a snowman."

"What brings you out in the Country?"

"Alcohol."

"You're out of bourbon already?"

"No, no, anhydrous alcohol. We have 1,000-gallons of unleaded but can't come up with enough ethanol to blend it into E85. We need 6,700 gallons of anhydrous."

"Is the ATF in town?"

"He left before Yellowstone blew up and hasn't been back."

"I'll call Dan."

"Dan the Sheriff is here and needs to talk to you."

"10-4."

"Damn, it's colder than a witch's ... , never mind. Sheriff, you're looking good. Let me get a cup of coffee and we can talk."

"I'll get right to business Dan; Kearny County needs 6,700-gallons of ethanol to produce E85."

"That will take about 2,500 bushels of corn, Sheriff."

"You dry the mash and feed it to your hogs, don't you?"

"Did that ATF guy come back?"

"No. If you won't produce it, will you sell the corn to the plant in Garden City?"

"I didn't say I wouldn't make it, Sheriff, but a fella has to be careful. If we all whipped up a batch or 2 it wouldn't take long to make the anhydrous."

"Will you do it? The 3 of you nearly cornered the market on grain supplies."

"I don't really see that we have much of a choice. I can't speak for the others, but the ethanol will get produced."

"Thank you. This was one request that I couldn't put on the air. Are you going to be able to grow crops this coming year?"

"I doubt it, not enough sun. We turned the soil and incorporated the ash and manure and then planted grass. June, do we have a care package for the Sheriff?"

"Would you like some fresh vegetables Sheriff?"

"Would !! Where did you get those?"

"From Randy's greenhouse. You know, you folks ought to take the greenhouse in town and use it to produce food. It's a big one and you can grow all kinds of vegetables."

"I thought you were going to radio him and let him know, June."

"It slipped my mind."

"How are things in town Sheriff?"

"Not good Dan. Food is very scarce, fuel is practically nonexistent, and if it weren't for the Sunflower Wind Farm, we wouldn't have power. Now, seeing how you're going to provide the ethanol, what can I do for you?"

"I could use a shipment of whiskey barrels."

"I see, how many do you need?"

"156, and in exchange, we'll give you the 6,700-gallons of anhydrous."

"Where do I buy whiskey barrels?"

"Try Kentucky, Sheriff. They'll run you about \$250 each, but in quantity, a little less."

"That's nearly \$6 a gallon for the alcohol!"

"Yeah, but I'll throw in a couple of cases of the finished product."

"10 cases and you have a deal."

"June?"

"We couldn't drink what we have in back stock in 2 lifetimes. Go ahead; if you can get a 5 year supply of barrels for 10 cases of bourbon and 6,700-gallons of anhydrous, I won't interfere."

Thirty-six barrels a year times 5 equals 180 less the 24 I already had equals 156; making bourbon wasn't all profit. However, you could sell the once used barrels. I had allowed for a 6% shrinkage rate because of where we stored the bourbon while it aged. Most distillers figure on a 3% shrinkage rate per year and they rotate the product. No two barrels of bourbon age exactly the same and we blended the barrels to get a uniform finished product, just like the big boys. It was an art, not a science, and what Randy had started, Jason had perfected.

"How long will it take to produce the anhydrous?" the Sheriff asked.

"I'll let you have what we already have on hand to use for biodiesel, and you can have the rest in a few weeks, Sheriff."

"Good, that only leaves me one problem."

"What's that?"

"How to explain buying whiskey barrels to the County Commissioners."

"I'll get you an extra 3 cases of bourbon, they'll understand once you explain it."

"I think June's idea of using the greenhouse to produce food will have more bearing on it than anything."

"I'll get the Commissioners each a care package too."

Personally, I suspect it was the 3 bushels of fresh vegetables I put together for the 3 County Commissioners more than the 3 cases of bourbon that made them see the light of day. It was that and the 300 pounds of spuds, the bags of rice, beans and onions. Or, maybe it was the bags of seeds I provided for them to start up the nursery. We may never know, but by the time the guys had the anhydrous ethanol ready, the whiskey barrels were here. I think they may have even given the County a little extra; they had to produce extra to replace the ethanol used to process biodiesel.

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 19

Obviously the secret of who was producing the Proprietor's Reserve Bourbon was becoming an open secret. I saw that as a bad thing, on top of the fact that the guys had, in fact, done a good job of cornering the market on many of the grain stocks and it only added to the fact that we were raising poultry, pork, beef and produced milk. I have no idea how the Commissioners managed to bury the \$40,000 they spent, probably by listing it as a fuel purchase. Altogether, we had 96 barrels of bourbon aging and using Dan's rule of thumb of a yield of 70% per barrel, we had ~ 3,600 gallons of aging bourbon, enough to provide nearly a gallon of the stuff for every man, woman and child in the County. The average consumption of distilled spirits was 2 gallons per person per year in the US.

I worried every day that someone would show up demanding food or liquor. We provided as much food as we could to the people in Lakin; we were all in this fight to survive together. The air was slowly, oh so slowly, clearing. We still got a fine layer of grit that scratched like volcanic ash a year after the eruption. As the sky brightened, so did Rachel's mood. I had been worried over nothing, she wasn't drinking.

The bitter cold kept us inside most of the time. It didn't really start to get warm until May. We'd burned up the coal and were now heating with wood. The anthracite from Pennsylvania wasn't available and the bituminous from West Virginia and Kentucky was expensive. I bought it anyway; a ton of coal equaled a cord of wood. Last year's grass was up and growing well, allowing them to turn the cattle and horses out. It didn't appear that there was enough sunlight to grow plants so we continued to grow the plants in the greenhouse.

The Sheriff wanted to set up a monthly contract for 3,350 gallons of anhydrous and regular deliveries of biodiesel. They processed the 10,000-gallons of oil into fuel and began supplying 3,500 gallons a month. Dan said that they could do it for about 12 months and then they would be getting close to a cutoff point.

One thing that had started back up when Yellowstone erupted was Marilyn doing home schooling. There was every indication that the school districts would be open and functioning by the fall of 2019. It would depend, more than anything, on the weather. School was held in the barracks day room and hot lunch was provided by yours truly. Trucks began to deliver food to Garden City and Lakin, allowing us to fill in the things we had used up. Because the men had kept the breeding program going, we have over 100 head of Angus to sell in the fall plus over 1,000 head of hogs. We finally had enough draft animals and saddle horses to sell horses too.

Because of the fuel supply problems, the school district asked Marilyn to conduct a remote campus in the barracks dayroom. We would be paid so much a head on a daily basis, requiring strict attendance records. It was cheaper for the school district to pay for a credentialed teacher on this basis, when compared to the cost of busing the students to town. The district would provide lesson plans and books. She and I would be doing

the same thing we'd done before only getting paid for it.

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The Pie and Chips are part of the Australian Diet.

A pie is a Meat Pie made of minced meat and gravy in a pasty case and lid. Definitely served with tomato sauce – or to Americans – Ketchup. Chips are our way of saying French fries. Cut from a potato and deep fried. Also served with tomato sauce or with vinegar and salt. The Geico Gecko is Australian, but not really, it's a fake English accent that was done by Kelsey Grammar in the first ad and by Dave Kelly in subsequent ads. The current actor is Steve Bassett according to the ad agency. One of Randy's internet searches to find out who did Geico's ads.

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It occurred to me that things were going backward rather than forward, the one room school houses disappeared in the 1950s. So did providing real educations to our youngsters. By the turn of the century students in large metropolitan school districts were lucky if they could read and write and only those select few students planning on college studied algebra, geometry, trigonometry, biology, chemistry and physics. What else were there, English, History and Civics? Our grandchildren and Jason and Karen's kids might actually end up getting an education.

For technical classes, we could teach them livestock handling, crop farming, gardening and food processing plus a class in the proper handling, care and use of firearms all lumped together in a class we called shop. We weren't preparing them for college; we were preparing them for life. Those lesson plans pertaining to the usual school subjects would be used to provide that portion of their education and shop was mostly on the job training.

The men started early gathering wood, clearing deadfall and dead trees. Having encroached on our firewood supply they had more than enough to do. It was another fine chance for them to get used to working the horses.

We were also benefiting from Sheriff's patrol in the warm months, a new occurrence probably related to the care baskets and the bourbon. We got word from Big Jake when the phone service was restored that they'd had not one, but two, experiences with criminals not unlike our own. They offered any parts we might need for the big turbine, too, but Ralph had it in good working order.

"Do you think we'll continue to have periodic problems with thieves?"

"June, I don't have a crystal ball, but we'll be running patrols next year, assuming we're able to plant crops. We're recovering, but it's slow coming. We had a good grass crop this year and may try our hand at small gardens and experimental crops of wheat, oats, bar-

ley, corn and hay. I caught a NWS announcement that temperatures were expected to rise another 5° this coming year. If we get enough sun, we'll get crops, but I expect a low yield."

"Are you hiring another security force?"

"No. But Dan and Jeremy aren't really farmers, they're cops. I talked to the Sheriff and he said we could work something out as long as the County didn't have to pay them. I offered to pay them ourselves, but in return, I needed them to be full time deputies. He told me he'd think it over."

"How are you guys coming with the firewood?"

"We replaced all we burned so everyone has a full 30 cords. I bought the boys upright freezers for their homes and now they'll be able to store supplies on their own. How are we doing money wise on farm operations this year?"

"We finally sold the remainder of last year's bourbon, and each farm should be able to sell 100 head of Angus and somewhere around 340 hogs. We've sold off all of the extra food from that good summer a couple of years back and have enough food to get up to next fall. Between the ethanol and the biodiesel, we're looking good and we might clear about \$150,000. You are still planning on 36 barrels of bourbon from now on, aren't you?"

"I thought I would, at least until that ATF guy comes back."

"In that case, I'll order bottles. We have the warehouse stacked to the roof with canning jars and there are at least enough lids to cap them all."

"You can still get bottles?"

"Yes, they come from Ohio and Ohio wasn't badly hurt by Yellowstone. I'm not sure about the labels though, they're made in California. Don't forget, we're going to have some income from the school district for educating the kids. It works out to \$100 per student per week. How is the grass doing?"

We have a good stand of grass. I'm thinking we should do ok fattening the cattle. Now, I have a question. Any ideas about Christmas for this year?"

"It's only August, I hadn't given it much thought."

"I did and I like to know how well the Gortex Parka and leggings worked out. I checked and they have a full line of sizes available now being it's supposed to be summer. If we wanted to go that route, all I'd need would be sizes."

"I'll have to agree, clothing does seem like a good idea. I'll talk to Mary and Julia about it

and let you know. I take it you're thinking of a practical Christmas this year."

"The little ones will need toys, but that's your department, not mine. Are we done multiplying and being fruitful?"

"I'd say so, yes. Neither of the girls plans on any more pregnancies."

"I sometimes wonder how far we've regressed due to all that happened."

"Not as far as one might think. We still have modern conveniences and electricity. The Amish have made do with far less than we have for quite some time. I do know that we're going to have to start slowing down, we aren't kids anymore."

Dan wasn't feeling well and I couldn't see any obvious signs of anything wrong. I didn't give a thought to running labs tests. I made him an appointment to see a doctor in town. The doctor ran labs tests and his cholesterol was about 260. I didn't get a complete report, but his LDLs were high and his HDLs were low; he couldn't remember about his VLDLs. His triglycerides were also elevated. The doctor put him on Lipitor, a statin. Curious, I ran a test for my cholesterol levels and if they were much lower, I'd be dead. Clearly, I was going to have to change our diet.

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I know I was pushing 60, but high cholesterol? He started me on Lipitor, 10mg once daily. June told me she was changing our diet, something the doctor also recommended. I don't smoke, I'm active, so why should I have high cholesterol? Drugs were getting harder to find and really expensive. My blood pressure was border line, 130 over 80, but the doctor said we'd treat the cholesterol problem and if that didn't bring it down he consider treating me for hypertension. He said he was concerned about my having a heart attack or stroke.

Dan and Jeremy helped with chores, if needed, but mostly ran patrols keeping an eye on the three farms. They both had pickups for themselves and E85 certified cars for my daughter-in-laws. The grandchildren all wanted to hear war stories from when Gunny and I were in Iraq. There wasn't much to tell, our people did patrols and hoped the ground wouldn't suddenly explode. As upper echelon NCOs, we didn't see a lot of action. That was very true for me, posted in the Green Zone. I didn't go *out there* any more than the job required.

We finally got the additional 750ml bottles, but Jason said the bourbon wasn't ready. I had a taste and it tasted good to me. We had so many recycled quarts and pints; we were nearly out of room in the warehouse up at Gunny's. The contract we worked out with the County for ethanol and biodiesel at least gave us something to do until it came time to do the fall plowing. With the sun occasionally peeking through, we were going to do those experimental crops next year and try to grow some veggies outside.

June got me everyone's sizes and I ordered the Gortex parkas and leggings, another dent in my dwindling supply of Krugerrands. I did very well; I managed to catch the pre-season sale. Man, I'm telling you, I wish I had half the energy she does. We checked the Cats over, making sure they were ready for winter. That's ironic; we didn't have much of a summer. I'd say 80% of the days were gray days, like a haze was hanging over the earth. With the military trucking in food from the southern states, our concerns over another shootout were greatly reduced. The price of cattle was back up, the big sell off had glutted the market lowering prices, but now beef and pork was short and the prices were back up.

"What's for dinner?"

"Broiled steak, rice, salad and veggies. Wash up, it's almost ready."

I sat down at the table and looked at my plate.

"Where's the beef?"

"Right there on your plate, Dan, you only get 4 ounces."

"At that rate, a side of beef would last us 2 years."

"Let's get you cholesterol down and then we'll talk about it, dear."

"But I'm taking Lipitor."

"I know. Once we get you down to 160 on your cholesterol and 130 triglycerides, we'll adjust your diet incrementally. I want to see your LDLs much lower and your HDLs much higher. When the ratio is down around 3.4 we begin to adjust."

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The total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol ratio is a number that is helpful in predicting atherosclerosis. The number is obtained by dividing total cholesterol by HDL cholesterol. (High ratios indicate higher risks of heart attacks, low ratios indicate lower risk). High total cholesterol and low HDL cholesterol increases the ratio, and is undesirable. Conversely, high HDL cholesterol and low total cholesterol lowers the ratio, and is desirable.

An average ratio would be about 4.5. Ideally we want to be better than average if we can. Thus the best ratio would be 2 or 3 or less than 4. Another ratio is LDL/HDL. The LDL/HDL ratio is actually a more pure ratio than total cholesterol/HDL. Because LDL is a measure of bad cholesterol and HDL is a measure of good cholesterol, whereas the total cholesterol is the sum of HDL, LDL, and the VLDL. Adding up the HDL, LDL and VLDL makes up the total cholesterol measurement. Even though total cholesterol/HDL ratio is not as accurate or pure as the LDL/HDL ratio, the former is more commonly obtained because the total cholesterol is easier and cheaper to obtain than the LDL cho-

lesterol level.

◦

"Dad, we have a cut fence."

"Where is it?"

"On the east side of Gunny's."

"I heard that, I'm coming to check," Gunny replied.

"I'll catch up to you guys; I'm just finishing my rice."

I got my rifle and pistol and headed out to see where we had a cut fence. June was on the radio rousting out Jason, Jim and John. We hadn't had any trouble up to now, were we going to have trouble with rustlers? I don't know why they used to hang rustlers when all they had to do was shoot them. Well, if they did that, Clint Eastwood couldn't have made *Hang 'em High*. Having a cut fence wouldn't mean much if whoever it was had come and gone, but that wasn't the case, Jeremy found a truck down the east-bound road about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile. We moved the pickups and staked out the fence; whoever it was would probably come back the same way.

"I got a man with a steer," Jason said.

"What an idiot, didn't he check to see if we patrolled the place?"

"Hold up there fella. Where do you think you're going with that steer?"

Cripes, the guy didn't even have a gun; to shoot him down would be pure murder.

"Are you going to call the Sheriff?"

"Why, we have 2 Deputies plus several Reserve Deputies here. Why did you take the steer?" Gunny asked.

"My family is hungry."

"A lot of people are hungry; did it occur to you to just ask for food?"

"And have you throw it in my face that I couldn't provide for my wife and kids? I don't have much pride left, but I'm not going to grovel."

"So, instead you're going to steal a 1,000 pound steer? What would you do with it when you got it home?"

"Kill it and divide it up among several families."

"We'd have sold you meat."

"Mister if I had money to buy meat, I wouldn't have to steal."

This was taking on the character of Jean Valjean who went to prison for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread in *Les Misérables*. The 1935 version of the movie was the best rendition although the 1958 film followed the Victor Hugo novel closer. The 2000 mini-series was good too. I stayed out of it; the steer belonged to Gunny and Marilyn.

"Are you a thief or are you willing to work for food?"

"There aren't any jobs."

"Are you a thief or are you willing to work for food?"

"I'd work, of course I would."

"Your first job is taking the steer back to the herd. Your second job is repairing the fence you cut. Then, you come to the house and we'll work something out."

"Going soft Gunny?"

"Doing anything to him would just make a bad situation worse, Dan. We can spare the grub and he might be a good hired hand."

"He could steal you blind, too."

"If he does, I can shoot him then."

What would you do in the same situation? Was Gunny a damned fool? At this point, we didn't even know the man's name. After we got back to the house, Gunny explained.

"I can't say that I wouldn't do the same thing if the situation was desperate enough. Now, if he brings the steer back to the herd, repairs the fence and shows up here, it means to me that the man has character. If not, we saved an expensive steer. I'm trying to turn a lose-lose situation into a win-win situation. He said family and used the term divide. We're going to be pretty shorthanded next summer if we have to farm the hard way."

"You may be right, but you may be biting off trouble, Gunny."

"We'll see won't we? It doesn't make a lot of sense to have one or several people commuting to the farms, what say we put them up in the barracks?"

"Say what? They'll be using the bunker to teach school."

"Family implies children to me. Marilyn gets paid for teaching by the head. Think about that."

"I'd have to talk that over with June."

"Did I hear my name?" I asked.

"Did you hear what he's proposing?"

"It makes perfect sense to me. If the guy puts the steer back, repairs the fence and has courage to come to the house it would say a lot to me about his character."

"But, June, we don't know anything about the guy."

"You can ask."

◦

Did you get the impression that June was overruling me? Good for you, you got that right. The man was a refugee from north of Cheyenne, Wheatland. He, his wife and 2 kids piled into their pickup and towed a small travel trailer down this far before the ash caught up to them. They were accompanied by 2 more couples in essential the same situation. They had exhausted their food supplies and later most of their money. None of them could find work anywhere in the area.

His name was Jeb Stuart and he wasn't related to the Civil War hero (James Ewell Brown Stuart). He worked as a welder in his former job. His friends were Abel Baker, very strange name, and John Hays. Abel worked in a car parts store and John was the assistant manager of a grocery store. They didn't have homes to go back to; Wheatland had been wiped out by the eruption. None of them knew jack squat about farming. They were all around Jason's age, late 30s. Paul had welded and had a welder, but Gunny didn't know how to weld. It was a Lincoln arc welder (R3R-500), if you're interested. Paul had money and the welder was set up to do arc welding or TIG. Input was 60 cycles, 3-phase, 220v. The primary source of power Paul used was line, but the 2mw wind turbine could also supply the electricity.

◦

"The fence is fixed."

"What's your name?"

Jeb Stuart, no relation."

"Where are you from?"

"Wheatland, Wyoming. Our homes were destroyed in the eruption."

"Our?"

"My two friends, Abel and John pulled trailers down too."

"What did you do before the eruption?"

"I was a welder."

"And your friends?"

"Abel work for a car parts store and John was the assistant manager of a grocery store."

"You said family."

"Wife, 2 kids. We're all married with families. We're out of food and nearly out of money, mister."

"Call me Gunny."

"Like a Marine?"

"Like a Marine."

"You said you had work for food."

"I'll go you one better, food, housing and schooling for your children."

"What kind of work?"

"Farming. Maybe an occasional welding job, we have a welder."

"What about my friends?"

"Them too."

"What do you do, mister, go around picking up strays?"

"The weather should be better this coming year and we're going to try planting. We'll be doing some of it with tractors, but will use horses for much of it. Frankly, we need labor. Until we can get it sorted out, we can put you up in the barracks on Dan's place for shelter. We'll have a remote campus for schooling and we aren't really short of food. We'll pay you part in room and board and part in cash so you can buy the things you need."

"If I say no?"

"Goodbye and good luck. Don't come back, you've used up your one free pass."

"I'll take it, but I can't speak for Abel and John."

"Fine, but they don't get a free pass. If the answer is yes, Dan lives on the big farm immediately south of here."

"That ok with you, Dan?"

"My wife says it is, so it is." I didn't explain that June owned the farm, not me.

◦

In 1911, Platte County was created from a portion of Laramie County, which joins it to the south. Platte County takes its name from the North Platte River. Wheatland, the county seat and largest town in Platte County, provides easy access to scenic and recreational areas. Set amid farms and ranches that are irrigated by the largest privately owned irrigation system in the Country, the town has a nine-hole public golf course, city parks with a free camping area, a swimming pool and tennis courts, Laramie Peak Museum, library, bowling alley, movie theater and fairgrounds. Before a modern water system was developed in Wheatland, water was brought to each home by ditches which ran down each street from Canal No. 2 to irrigate lawns and gardens and to furnish water for homes. Wheatland still has many remains of the In-town irrigation system that made all the old trees in Wheatland. Wheatland was incorporated in 1905, and became the county seat of Platte County in 1911.

Settlement was facilitated by the 1868 construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. With the advent of large-scale ranching, the activities of rustlers and vigilante groups reached a climax in the 1892 cattle war of Johnson County, which was followed by similar conflicts between cattle and sheep ranchers. (See History of Tom Horn, etc.) Oil was discovered in the early 1880's, and production began in earnest in 1890.

◦

Gunny said he thought \$3 an hour plus room and board was a good place to start.

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 20

Gunny and I followed Jeb back to where they were camped out in a park. He talked it over with the other two men and the wives and we had ourselves some hired hands. Jeb hooked his trailer back up to his pickup and they followed us back to June and my place. When we got there, Marilyn and June had a big spread prepared in the barracks. I still wasn't too sure about all of this, but I kept my peace.

"Are your pickups gas or diesel?"

"Diesel."

"Fine, I show you where the diesel pump is tomorrow and you can fill up your tanks. There is food in the freezer and in the storage room. Take whatever you need, but don't waste it. Gunny says we'll compensate you room and board plus \$3 an hour. We make our own diesel fuel and generate our own electricity here, so those things are basically included. My wife, June, is a paramedic, so if you have any medical needs, please let her know. Sorry about the lack of privacy, but you all have your trailers if you need that."

I suppose it was close to 10:30pm by now and I was tired. Gunny and Marilyn headed home and June and I went back to the house.

"Darn, I missed the news."

"I'm glad you saw things my way, Dan."

"June, it's your farm. Whether or not I agree with you, I can't change that. I think I could use a drink and a good night's sleep."

"Make me an old fashioned?" I asked.

"I was rather surprised you agreed to take them in, June."

"I have a history of picking up strays."

"Well, there are Jim and Mary; am I one of your strays?"

"No, you're my sex object."

o

"Bacon and eggs? What did I do to deserve this?"

"If you have to ask..."

"I thought the yolk of an egg was pure cholesterol."

"It is, but an occasional egg won't hurt you. I'll do a blood draw tomorrow and run your blood through the machine, but off hand, I'd guess your cholesterol is coming down."

Numerous dietary studies have been undertaken to determine the effect of cholesterol intake on the level in the body.

Thirteen patients at the Highland Hospital in Oakland, California were fed the equivalent in egg yolks of that found in 15 eggs per day for a 3 week period. The serum cholesterol did not increase significantly in any except two bedridden, obese patients. Four of the 7 ambulatory patients in the study actually showed a slight decrease in serum cholesterol.

In the Ireland-Boston Heart Study the researchers followed 600 Irishmen between the ages of 30 and 60 who had lived in Boston for 10 or more years and their brothers who had never left the old Country. The Irish brothers ate about twice as many eggs as their American brothers – averaging over 14 per week. Yet, the Irish brothers had lower levels of cholesterol in their bloodstream, and their hearts were rated from 2 to 6 times healthier. The same Harvard doctor examined both groups. More physical exercise was given as a possible reason for this difference.

Dr. Robert Itchiness, a cardiologist in New York City specializing in metabolic disorders, has treated over 8,000 patients. He lowered the serum cholesterol markedly in 63 percent of his patients with a diet high in meat, milk, and eggs. Dr. Itchiness believes that 95 percent of all heart trouble is associated with high serum triglycerides and attributes this to the staggering increase in sugar consumption – up from 7 pounds per person in 1840 to over 100 pounds today. (Cute name, huh?)

I wanted the bacon and eggs, so I listened to her little lecture on cholesterol. Before you jump me about the wage rate, stop and consider the extras we'd be providing Jeb and the others including healthcare, fuel, schooling, etc. These were no small matters in a post-apocalyptic world. We were giving them something that money couldn't buy too, their dignity. Or, would you rather we just shot him, my first choice?

o

Having someone who could use Paul's heavy duty arc welder turned out to be a good thing; we had put off dozens of minor repairs that could be fixed now without having to pay a high hourly rate. Having justified the low wage rate, I also realized that the total cost would be the same as it was for anyone else, just shifted. But, it was like the bourbon, it didn't cost much per gallon to produce, until you counted the costs of the barrels, bottles and labels. June told me it was a shame I missed the lecture she'd given Mary about the costs of finished products.

A barrel yielded 37 gallons of hooch, 140 liters or ~ 187 bottles selling for \$20 each. The ingredients cost maybe \$50, depending on the value of the corn, wheat and barley. The bottles cost \$1 each and the barrel \$250 less the \$125 I got for the used barrel. So the

average bottle of bourbon cost $(\$125 + \$50) \div 187 = 94\text{¢} + \1 for the bottle or right at \$2 counting the label. Like I told you, making bourbon wasn't free. It was nice of the county to cut our costs to \$1.30 a bottle (by now, you're all cost accountants).

"When did you folks do, cut and run?"

"When they went to the first alert, we starting packing up, there wasn't any reason leave then. When they went to orange, we talked it over and flipped a coin. When they issued the evacuation order we were gone in 60 seconds. Did you folks have shelters or stay in that barracks?"

"Yes to both, we have a shelter but spent this one in the barracks. The shelter would be a bit tight for a long term stay. Were you in front of it?"

"Until we got near Lakin and then the ash blew in. We thought we had enough food and if we didn't we had enough money to buy what we needed. Didn't work out, is all."

"You're lucky Jeb, I might have shot you."

"That's why I left my guns home."

"I should have figured you had guns. But you know, you see someone helping himself and anger sometimes overcomes reason."

"I feel bad about that. I didn't figure anyone would help after no one would give us work."

"We'll probably adjust the wages after we figure out what the room and board and other things are costing us. We're not trying to gouge you guys."

"We aren't complaining."

"It doesn't matter, fair is fair. June would rip us a new one if we didn't pay a fair wage."

"This isn't your farm?"

"It belongs to June and her kids. Well to a corporation, but they own all of the stock. This is a second marriage for both of us."

"Divorced?"

"Widower and June was a widow."

"This is Kearny County right?"

"Yes."

"It seems like I read something in the paper or heard something on the news a few years back. Some kind of shootout or something?"

"40 men from the Kearny County Sheriff's office went up against 100 FEMA."

"Oh that's right, all the FEMA guys were killed and most of the locals."

"That's the one, Jeb. Some call it the Deerfield Massacre and some the Kearny County Massacre."

"And you lost someone?"

"Not me, no. June, Marilyn and Rachel lost their husbands, they were Reserve Deputies. Ray was there too, he was one of the three survivors."

"You said you were a widower?"

"Cancer, my wife of nearly 30 years died from advanced breast cancer."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to pry."

"I sprained my wrist about a year or so later and met June at the hospital. She was working as a Paramedic."

"Were you a farmer before?"

"Command Sergeant Major in the Army, 30 years. I had retired shortly before the war. Gunny was a Master Gunnery Sergeant with 28 years and Hank a Master Sergeant in Corps with 20 years. My buddy Tom also lives here, he was also a CSM in logistics."

"What about those guards?"

"They're my sons, Dan and Jeremy, former police officers and currently Deputy Sheriffs who do the security for our 3 farms."

"And June and her husband had 2 kids, right?"

"Actually foster children."

"How come you don't have any ash?"

"I wore out a plow getting it turned in. We turned the soil as soon as the ground thawed, disked and then rototilled in manure. Once we had the ground leveled, we seeded it and just left it lay."

"At least you have a greenhouse that must have come in handy."

"Fresh veggies year round have been nice. It must have been tough living in a camping trailer all of this time."

"You don't have any idea. Cramped space, no privacy and expensive to keep warm; they weren't really built for year round living."

o

Jeb was working here, Abel for Gunny and John for Hank. The men had leaned towards being well prepared. They spent the war sheltered for 14 weeks and the wind was out of the west. Wyoming wouldn't be habitable for decades, possibly centuries, according to the TV news. We weren't short of work and Gunny had gotten this one right.

The hogs were first to go; we had so many they had to truck them to Garden City. Then the Angus left a truckload at a time. If we could get some kind of crop the following summer, very little or none of it would go to market, we wanted the granaries full first. We weren't down to bows and arrows, yet. We probably wouldn't be for some time to come, at least not until we ran out of powder and primers.

"Dan, do you think the Country will recover?"

"June, I don't really know. We've had a 1-2-3 punch, with the pandemic, the war and now Yellowstone. It could take decades for the world to recover. Frankly, I'm surprised that we've done as well as we have, it must be the resiliency of the American people. I believe that Jeb and the others showing up was a sign of the times."

"The times of plenty are over?"

"What did the last load of rice cost?"

"About 3 times the going rate."

"And the coal was even more expensive, right?"

"Almost 5 times what we used to pay."

"I think we're going to burning wood in the furnaces, farming with horses and have a running battle with people who don't have much."

"We can't house families in that barracks for long."

"You're right, but every acre of land we take out of production for housing cuts into our yield."

o

Rachel was finally coming around. She wasn't her old self, but she wasn't bordering on catatonic anymore either. I think the realization of what had happened had finally sunk in and she knew that we were going to make it. It was that, and perhaps her grandchildren who didn't understand and flocked to her just as before. She had lost some weight, but it looked good on her, more like the Rachel I'd met years before. I wasn't getting the yields from the greenhouse that it would have gotten if the plants were outside, but it was enough to feed all of us with a little left over for friends.

I was a bit irritated with Dan, getting whiskey barrels instead of hard cash for the alcohol, but like the farmers of the late 18th century, whiskey was a cash crop. Randy had said you could thank George Washington for American bourbon, the Pennsylvania farmers moved to Kentucky after the Whiskey Rebellion. I had a feeling that Don would want some of the used whiskey barrels to age his wine in.

It was time to get everyone vaccinated and I arranged for the vaccines from the hospital in Lakin. These, too, were hard to come by. I asked Jeb's wife, Joan, about their vaccinations and their kids were due for boosters and the adults hadn't had shots in years. An ounce of prevention would be even more important now. We probably weren't going to get the help from the residents of Lakin we had in the previous years for the garden, so we agreed to cut them back.

"So, kiddo, how small do we make them?"

"I was thinking perhaps a ½ acre per family. We'd need five acres here and the rest of you could get by with maybe 3 acres."

"But what about the jars in the warehouse?"

"What about them, they won't spoil. If nothing else, we can sell some for what we paid to get them back."

"Are you still going to rent garden spaces?"

"If anyone asks, I suppose we should."

"You'd better buy all the lids you can find, I doubt manufactured goods are going to be easy to come by."

"We have to balance that by what we're going to use, Marilyn. Conventional canning lids are only good for 5 years. There is a lid that's made that will store for up to 10 years, I'll look into them. I read about them on Walton Feed, they're called the reusable Morris Home Canning Lids and Seals." [Out of business. Try the Tattler reusable lid. S&S Innovations, Corp, (970) 255-7011, PO Box 373 - Fruita, Colorado 81521]

"What are you looking for?"

"Maybe those plastic jar lids made by Jarden would last longer. We have enough lids we may have to sell some."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves, June. We can't harvest the food until it grows and it won't grow until we plant it."

"And if the sun doesn't shine it's irrelevant."

"I was going to say that."

What's more, we have to get through this winter before we'll know if we're going to be able to plant."

"But, we'll start plants just in case, right?"

"Yes, when it's time after the first of the year. I was looking forward to a little time off from gardening."

o

That was the only problem with having the only greenhouse on the 3 farms; I ended up doing most of the gardening with a little help from Dan. I guess I was waiting for people to volunteer to help me out. I finally got it from the wives of the new men, Joan (Jeb), Sally (John) and April (Abel). In fact, once I showed them how I did things, they took over for me. It was late in the fall of 2019, nearly 2 years after Yellowstone blew up and, quite frankly, I was getting tired. I wanted to just get on a horse or a snowmobile as circumstances permitted and feel the air blowing through my hair. What was the point of having huge herds if you couldn't get out and ride?

I finally got the recipe right on the pepper cheese using a mixture of American and Havarti. After the cheese was aged, I blended it, added the peppers and formed it. It went well with the beer that Ray brewed. Too well, if you ask me, maybe I should consider cutting the amount of hot peppers. Still, with all of the bourbon, wine and brew available to us, a surprisingly small quantity was consumed. It was a rare day that anyone got 'in his cups', an old English expression for drunk.

Did I mention that we also grew a little popcorn? It was a large kernel yellow variety that we'd picked up in Colorado once. It produced very large popped kernels. Soda pop was a thing of the past except for root beer.

How to make root beer from scratch:

You don't want to use the extract do you? You want to make root beer from scratch don't you? Well, here is how to do it. Do NOT use sassafras that still has safrole be-

cause it is a carcinogen (it causes cancer). The first thing you need to do is gather your roots, barks, and herbs. What do you gather? The Hires root beer recipe is a great source, but there are a couple of items that you must have, and a few that you should have.

Must Have: Vanilla (use real vanilla, but not the bean) and Wintergreen

Should Have: Ginger, Licorice and Sarsaparilla

The actual amounts that you use are up to you, but it is generally an ounce of each ingredient. Wintergreen is the main ingredient used in root beers today, so more Wintergreen and less other ingredients for a post 1960 tasting root beer (2½ oz. Wintergreen ¼ oz. other ingredients). A little later I'll provide you with a real root beer recipe used in the 1890's, and it includes exact measurements. When the roots are gathered they should be rinsed in clear water. All dirt and tops should be removed. Roots that are heavy should be cut or split. When it comes to barks, care should be taken that the woody part is removed. The inner skin is the part of the bark that will be used. Herbs & leaves must be gathered when the plant is in seed or flowering stage. When gathering herbs, the plant must be cut where the first leaf begins to branch out. When we state leaves, it is the leaves only that are wanted. After washing, these items should be laid out to dry, and care should be taken so that they are spread out where the air can get around them to prevent molding. Or go buy them at a health food store.

Now just boil the ingredients for about 30 minutes, remove the roots and herbs, and proceed to the fermentation stage described earlier. Vanilla beans contain very tiny seeds, so don't use the bean unless you're prepared to filter the liquid first (boiling the bean without slicing it open doesn't provide enough flavor).

It is the process of fermentation that puts the little bubbles, carbon dioxide, into the root beer. It is also pretty simple to accomplish. Pour your flavored sugar water into a bucket that can be covered, and then add a package of ale yeast when the liquid's temperature is warm (about 75° F.). Over the next 12 hours the yeast will start eating the sugar and huge amounts of carbonation and foam will result and then subside. Now it is time to bottle. Do not use champagne yeast, which is often recommended by root beer manufacturers and books written 20 years ago. The type of yeast that you use will substantially affect the final flavor, so experiment. Liquid yeast costs a lot more, but tastes much cleaner and should probably be used if you're making a traditional root beer from natural ingredients.

Hop Tech has a full line of yeast - just remember to use ale yeast. One thing that must be followed strictly is to keep everything clean. Bacteria can easily contaminate your root beer and make it really nasty (I am understating the importance of this - please keep everything clean). Along the same lines, don't leave your root beer exposed to air, keep it covered, or bacteria will get into it. Now, a note on tradition, fermenting root beer was how things were originally done. By 1866, even though carbonation by fermentation was still popular, it was not uncommon to force carbonate.

After the initial carbonation subsides, about 12 hours, you can start bottling. If you don't have a good uniform fermentation going, you might want to consider letting it ferment another 12 hours or so, which will help ensure you have a uniform yeast population throughout the brew. Once again, any homebrew supplier can help with bottling supplies. You will need a bottle-filler, which is much easier than a funnel, and keeps your root beer from being exposed to air. You will also need some bottles. Make sure all bottles are clean. Now all you have to do is transfer the root beer to the bottles. You will need to keep an eye on the bottles.

The reason you don't want to want to use champagne yeast is that champagne yeast has been developed to live at much higher pressures than ale yeast and your root beer can continue fermenting until the bottles explode. Although this can also happen with ale yeast, it is very rare and the conditions have to be just right (including glass of less than the best quality). Once the pressure in your bottles gets to a certain point, the ale yeast will be killed off because it can't live in a high pressure environment.

My recipe:

2 oz Sarsaparilla

2 oz Sassafras

½ oz licorice

2 oz Wintergreen leaves

2½ pounds sugar

2 gallons water

Fortunately, I loaded up on root beer extract and after mixing, could just go to the fermentation stage; it was much easier than trying to find some of the ingredients. You can do it any way you choose. Right about now, I'd kill for a Coke. I did have a cola syrup extract, but it didn't make the real thing. I was trying to get a man with a machine that used the Coke syrup to sell me a can, easier said than done. Those cans you see in some places hold premixed Coke and the same cans in other places hold pure syrup. It was expensive before, now it was almost out of reach.

Marilyn had been right about the manufactured items and we had really stocked up. They were in such short supply as to be virtually nonexistent. She had taken the 2½ ton truck on that last shopping trip and we had really loaded up, space wise a truckload. I didn't want anyone using moss so you know what much of the space was taken up by, right girls? And Sears, Wards and Penny's didn't put out free catalogs anymore so we stocked up on Northern. If you ask me that's what's happening to our timber resources, not lumber.

o

I got Jeb with Jim and Don to learn horse handling, they were the best. We got our first bit of snow in late September and it was time to service the Cats again. Doesn't time fly when you're not having fun? Once the snowmobiles were ready to go, Gunny and Hank

gave me a hand and we got the snow blower mounted. June told me she had talked to Marilyn about this coming summer's gardens and we were going to go for ½ acre per family. I'm afraid I misunderstood, but when she counted heads on our farm and said it added up to 5 acres, I got it figured out.

By now the 3 newcomers had proven their worth and we had a bit of an idea what it was costing us to have them here. Hank, Gunny and I talked it over and settled on \$6 an hour for their wage in addition to the other things we were providing. It basically kept them on par with the other hired hands. We had hired hands in the singlewides so we decided to look for 3 more. That also meant more propane tanks. We didn't need to expand the septic systems; that had been done when the farms started to turn into communities.

Although the 3 men already had their own firearms, we weren't hurting ourselves by equipping them with supplies from the military stores Quonset hut. I talked to the Sheriff about the possibility of the men becoming Reserve Deputies. They didn't have the necessary classes and June couldn't try to run any more of those phony certificates by him. I reminded him he was an elected official, but that didn't seem to cut much ice. I also pointed out that they claimed they were military policemen in Iraq and he told me he'd think about it.

When you start to count the number of people we now had, we didn't really need to hire mercs. My boys could handle the routine security and we had enough bodies on hand to make up a couple of squads in a pinch. I realize that the 4 of us were getting a little long in the tooth, but what we lacked in mobility, we more than made up in experience.

"Got any hot rub?"

"Got a sore spot?"

"Nah, honey, I'm just getting older, probably have a touch of old Arthur in my shoulder."

"We wear out don't we?"

"I'm not ready to fade away just yet."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 21

I read where June summarized the events into 3 events, the pandemic, the war and Yellowstone. I would have had a longer list than she, but in terms of external events, I supposed she was right. The weather problems mostly followed the war and it had been a flip-flop situation with long periods of cold and long periods of warm. Yellowstone erupting had changed all of that. We were slowly emerging from a volcanic winter, probably worse than anything in the past 700,000 years. The fact that Long Valley didn't turn into a super volcano was a happenstance. According to records, Long Valley erupted about 760,000 years ago and Yellowstone erupted 640,000 years ago. They were, relatively speaking, rather close together.

If Long Valley hadn't pooped out and vented into Mono Lake, we surely could have had 2 Supervolcanoes. Can you imagine what that would have been like? I had been wrong on the amount of ash we'd get from Yellowstone, I'd told June about 5" and we got closer to 12". If we'd have had to put up with another Bishop-like tuff, I'm not so sure we could have recovered. The Bishop ash bed was probably well on its way to erosion by the time that Lava Creek eruption occurred. I ran into another file on Randy's computer he had titled, 'Tuffs.pdf'. It talked about how geologists went about dating sites. There was even an identified tuff for when Crater Lake blew its top.

One thing I did learn was that the 'Bishop Tuff' was different from the 'Bishop Ash Bed'. The Ash bed spread as far east as eastern Kansas, while the Tuff was a couple of hundred meters thick and was the area where Long Valley had a pyroclastic flow. We could have some fun this winter, it was far warmer. Too cold to ride horses, but we got the sleighs out and they were fun. We did quite a bit of snowmobiling too; we only had about 18" of snow. We even put loose hay on one of the hay wagons and pulled it with 2 Clydesdales and had an old fashioned hayride for the kids, ending with hot cocoa and all the stuff I remember from when I was a kid in Iowa.

This winter was much like the Iowa winters I'd experienced growing up in Clarinda. I took it to mean that we would probably be able to plant the following summer. June had said she'd rent out garden spaces but wasn't thinking of planting 40 acre gardens. However, when I saw what kind of winter we were having, I strongly suggested that she plant every plant she could and we'd try to emulate the production of 3 summers back, 2017. I can tell you now that if we hadn't bought up grain and hay from the farmers who called it quits, we wouldn't have made it through this winter unless we had cut the herds of livestock way back.

o

As it was, we'd kept the heifers and our herd this year would be even bigger, allowing us to market close to 300 head. We had ~200 calves and they ran about 50-50 steer and heifers and since we had the feed, why not go ahead and increase our herds to 300 and have 300 calves to market this coming year. 300 head averaging about 1,200 pounds at \$3 a pound would give us each on the order of \$360,000. But with gasoline running \$10

a gallon, it probably wasn't as much as it sounds like. We'd buy the 15% gas and produce enough anhydrous alcohol to blend enough of the product to refill our tanks. In our case, that was \$1,500 for 150 gallons of gas.

You knew we're on the gold standard, right? Expressed in gold, those cattle were worth 24 pounds of gold. You can't eat gold and that \$12 package of toilet paper, when you could find it, ran close to \$30, \$1 a roll. If we increased our feeder cattle to any larger population, we couldn't grow hay and would have to buy it. Whatever you think hay was worth, triple it. We probably wouldn't be marketing much grain even if we had a good crop; we had more than enough livestock to feed.

o

I'm glad Dan didn't wait until planting time to tell me he thought we should go for broke and try and grow 30 acre gardens. I let Marilyn know and she just laughed, Gunny had already told her. She knew before I did? I've got about 3 spare pieces of my mind I'm going to have to share with that husband of mine.

"I'll plant for you like I did back in '17, June, don't let it upset you. We think we can go ahead and rent out 10 acres for gardens and plant 30 acres like we did the last time. You're short a few canning jars, but the stores need the canned goods and I don't believe we'll have much problem getting help."

"In the future, I'd appreciate hearing it from you before everyone else knows it, Dan. What if there had been a problem that you hadn't anticipated?"

"I went into the warehouse up at Marilyn's and counted the cases of jars, dear. You bought so many lids you were going to have to either use them up or sell them. The weather seems to be cooperating this winter and I just mentioned it to Gunny."

"And probably Tom and Hank, too."

"They were there, yes. Think of the good news, we are going to have close to 300 head of cattle and 1,000 head of hogs to market this year. The coffers of the corporations are really going to be fat."

"I see some fat and its right between your ears, don't you go changing the subject on me."

"Oh, I thought you were talking about my gut."

"That too, you old Sergeants have been drinking a tad too much of Ray's beer."

"Now have I gotten drunk once in all the time..."

"That's not the point."

"What is the point?"

"The point is that I'm angry and you should be old enough to know to just shut up when your wife is angry with you."

"Ah, I get your point, yes dear."

I let him stew in his own juice for a while before I fixed him and me drink. It was more the idea that Marilyn knew before I knew. I had the same problem with Randy a few times; I think it is a guy thing. The good news about the occasional spat is the making up part and letting your husband know who really wears the pants in the family. That's probably what I get for being so independently minded.

o

Life is the same in Kansas as it is in Iowa. There isn't any place a man can go that he doesn't get his head handed to him on a plate. I told June about the garden idea the minute I saw her, but Gunny must have seen Marilyn before I got into the house. All I did was mention the idea; I didn't tell him we were going to do it. I wanted to see what he thought before I took it any further. Kate used to get me like that sometimes too. I think it is a girl thing. Later, she made us drinks, so I assume she got over it.

All the next day, I was rolling the events of the past 11 years over in my mind. The pandemic, the war and Yellowstone – just a darn minute here, there were more events than those; it was just a question how you looked at it. I backed up and started ticking them off: H5N1, pneumonic plague, WW III, three husbands being killed in a shootout, the climate problems, that attack before Yellowstone, the problems on the west coast and the super eruption, a total of 8. Maybe these farms were jinxed. Still considering all of those things, only 4 people had died, nothing short of a miracle. Does anyone know where I can get a large telescope? Never mind, if one's coming, I don't want to know. Were we done or was there one more to go? How many? Too many!

We had more important concerns, the food and livestock feed supplies were getting low. Processing soybeans gave us soybean meal, an excellent feed, hopefully enough to get us through until we could harvest the first cutting of alfalfa. We combined a portion of the timothy for the Clydesdales and kept a few acres solely for seed. Well, what the hell we'd have to gamble that my weather forecast was right. I'm not all that handy on a computer and asked June to create an ad for seasonable laborers that we could post early. She could also announce we'd be renting garden space this year. All she had to list was Tom's phone number: 620-355-XXXX and he could do the hiring. If we could get a commitment of labor, we could plan the size of the gardens accordingly.

o

In the first week the notice was up, Tom said he had about 200 calls. That was April and

he dutifully noted the names and phone numbers. June suggested he start the hiring process soon so we could start planting in late April or early May. People would be paid in food the same as before. A full season of work would earn them a bonus of 100 pounds of meat: pork, beef or chicken.

I helped June plant the seed and get the sets going, it takes a lot. This year Jason and the boys plus Jeb could take over the farming and I'd take care of the livestock. I'm not so sure it was a good idea, but we had a milking machine and all I had to do besides that was to feed them and shovel.

"Is Rachel up to managing the garden like she did 3 years ago?"

"She claims she is. Marilyn will garden until canning begins and will help her get started. We agreed that I'll make the cheese for all 3 farms. Now you tell me something, when is the bourbon getting bottled?"

"Jason said anytime, it's ready."

"Get that done and out of the way. This is a 12 barrel year, but it won't be long before you have to blend and bottle 24 barrels and after that 36 barrels. '17 was the 24 barrel year and that will be ready in '22. You did 36 barrels in '18, the year that Yellowstone blew."

"Just a minute, I'm using my portable calculator. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. That's right it will be ready in '23. Have you been working on bottles?"

"I lined up 550 dozen bottles a year. I checked and they will be able to honor the contract. They asked what flavor of white wine we produced."

"What did you tell them?"

"Chablis, it was the first name that came to mind. They recommended green bottles but I told them we'd pass, people were accustomed to our packing in clear bottles. I told it was a cheap wine and didn't require any fancy packaging. They also offered to print the labels, but I told them we got those locally. They said they assumed it was cheap wine because we wanted screw caps and not corks."

"I suppose we could use the extra bottles for Don's wine."

"That might depend on how good it turns out Dan. If it's really good, we might want to go to green bottles and corks. Cost wise, it isn't any different. We'd only need one extra piece of equipment, a corker."

"You mean Don would need one piece of equipment."

"Yes, that's what I meant. But, the company gives a volume discount and if we buy the

bottles and supplies for him, he'll get them cheaper."

"Did I tell you I figured out the margin on a bottle of bourbon? It cost us \$2 a bottle including the barrel, bottle and value of the grain."

"Did you count the cost of propane for the heater, the cost of the labels and the value of your labor?"

"I counted the labels, but not the other things. It's close enough."

I didn't feel like explaining the incremental costs Dan had overlooked, he probably was close enough. I hadn't started out to understanding accounting but when Randy died and I ended up with the farm, I started to think about it. I worked my way through a simple example and that was all it took. From then on, I always thought about the costs associated with our production, it was necessary if we were to properly value our finished products.

This year, we could probably reduce the price of our products because we were recycling the jars and only had the cost of the lids and the labor to wash the bottles. Most of the bottles were already clean according to my spot checks, perhaps we could get by with sterilization. I took the calls on the garden spaces and within a month had all of the spots rented. I warned each person that they have to get their sets from the nursery in town because we were going to try large gardens like we did in '17. I didn't need to, when the sign went up and we were looking for labor the nursery assumed we were going for a repeat season. I tried to get more mason jars, but they were unavailable. I could preorder for the following year, however. I placed an order for 300 cases each of pints and quarts and 3,000 dozen lids. I also asked about the plastic lids and was referred to Jarden. Assuming we went through all of the jars, the lid order would only replace what we used.

o

Come April, we were seeing the sun. Having plowed last fall, we were almost ready to plant. The man from the extension service came out and tested the soil and we incorporated a little lime. We planted the garden crops first; they already had the people out washing the used jars because Marilyn told June she wouldn't use them unless they were washed first. We farrowed close to 400 pigs on our farm and I told Hank to save a pig, my old boar looked plum tuckered out. As the cattle went, we had 305 Angus calves, altogether.

"The National Weather Service says we may hit 80° this year. The Arctic icecap won't completely melt either."

"We're getting back to normal?"

"Not exactly," Gunny continued. "Europe won't have any kind of growing season. They

postulated it would take them a couple of years to warm up enough to grow crops."

"It wouldn't be the first time Europe went through bad times, they were hit pretty hard by the Little Ice Age according to a file on the computer."

"I saw something on National Geographic Channel or someplace about that. It lasted from about 1300 until late in the 19th century, didn't it?"

"Something like that, and just as they were starting to come out of it, Mt. Tambora erupted. Since then we had a period of warming that some associated with the industrial revolution. I'd say that the weather is pretty much straightened out now, once we get over the eruption."

"Did you see the report on TV?"

"What report?"

"There was a major raid up in Nebraska. They hit a small town of about 500 and killed nearly everyone."

"Nearly?"

"The reports are they kidnapped the women. The Governor of Nebraska activated the National Guard, but by the time they arrived, whoever it was had taken off."

"And they didn't have any idea where they headed?"

"The Guard came from Lincoln so they didn't go east. Apparently they came in from the north, but could have headed back north, west or to the south."

"I'll tell Dan and Jeremy to be especially watchful."

o

"June, Gunny told me about some raid up in Nebraska, did you hear about that?"

"Some small town in southwest Nebraska, I can't remember the name. It was about straight north of Garden City, just on the other side of the state line a few miles."

"How far is it from here?"

"About 180 miles."

"I think I'll get a hold of Big Jake and give those folks in Leoti a heads up."

"It was near US 83, if that helps."

"Not much, it doesn't, US 83 goes north from Garden City all the way to I-80. This really doesn't make much sense, further north they'd be worse off than we are here. Why would anyone raid a small town?"

"Why does anyone do anything, Dan? What did that bunch gain attacking Leoti a few years back? Crazy people do crazy things; it has always been that way."

"Hey Jake, Dan Robbins down in Lakin, did you hear about that thing in Nebraska? It's on the TV, I didn't see the news, but they were just across the line on 83. I suppose you're right, Garden City is a straight shot south, but you're not that far from 83. Oh it looks like we'll be planting full crops, but I don't know if the weather will cooperate. That's what June always says. Ok, thanks, you too."

"What do I always say?"

"Prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

"What are you going to do?"

"We're planting; the garden crops are all in, by the way. Are you full up on medical supplies?"

"I just donated FFP and replaced it; I'm as ready as I can be. You don't suppose they'll end up here do you?"

"We're sort of off the beaten path, I doubt it. Of course, we had that shootout back in '17, so I don't think a person can complete discount the possibility. If they're hitting towns, I don't see that they'd hit 3 isolated farms. I radioed the boys to keep their eyes open."

o

I was still a Reserve Deputy and as were Marilyn or Rachel. We'd hit 60 and be out. I found my Chief's Special and put it in an ankle holster I didn't intend to be caught unawares. I let Julia, Mary and Karen know about the problem in case they hadn't heard. I can remember my mother talking about the scare they had when Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate went on a shooting spree in '59 scaring the hell out of most of the Midwest.

Doc had died last year, MI. I didn't have him for a backup if we did have trouble, but then, I didn't really expect that bunch would make it here. I can't really say when this Country went to hell, maybe it was on 9/11/01. It had been one thing after another, spaced out of course. We were ready when the flu pandemic hit and could even handle the plague, but it never got here. Then the war and the aftermath with Randy, Paul and Mike getting murdered by FEMA; every time we thought we were getting ahead of the

curve, something else seemed to happen. I had planned on growing old, fat and happy with Randy and raising a flock of kids. I'd turned the other cheek so many times, with the cards life dealt me, I wasn't sure I had another 'adventure' in me.

For all of the bad things that had happened, there were the good, Jim and Mary and then Dan. We had food on the table, more to plant, I had grandchildren and step grandchildren, I guess I better stop and count my blessings. What the heck, steak and baked potatoes sounds good, I can open a can of mushrooms and surprise Dan, he'll like that.

◦

We were still running those school buses that they'd brought back from Leoti. I think they're about on their last legs, next year we'll have to come up with a different way to get folks here. I looked on the internet and found a guy in Kentucky who built custom horse drawn wagons that sat up to 30 people. I think we could build something like that ourselves, so I downloaded the picture. It used a standard wagon frame that was extended and sort of looked like a low hay wagon with benches on the sides and a canvas top. I figured probably 6 Clydesdales to pull one wagon, that's a fair amount of weight.

We planted soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa and timothy. I expect it was close to 200 acres in each category, beans, corn and grass. We could get 2 or 3 cuttings off the alfalfa. On timothy, first cutting is harvested in midsummer and is more mature, containing a higher stem to leaf ratio and is coarser in texture. It is actually healthier as it is higher in fiber and lower in protein than second cutting timothy.

◦

The next we heard of that bunch that hit the town up in Nebraska was that they were somewhere in northern Kansas. I think that was about 2 weeks later, well into May. I helped in the garden, planting spuds, eye up. Supposedly, store bought potatoes can't be used for planting because they're treated to prevent them from sprouting. Un-huh. June said she started with seed potatoes way back when and because they were an heirloom plant, she just saved the eyes with extra meat and planted those ever since. We figure on a yield of 250 cwt/acre; 25,000 pounds or about 250 bags. We planted 2 acres of potatoes per farm. Even if they only yielded 200 cwt/acre, we'd have plenty to sell. Personally, I was looking forward to new potatoes and peas, one of my favorite dishes.

"They're in Goodland," Gunny said.

"Who is in Goodland?"

"Those people, the ones that hit that town up in Nebraska."

"What are they doing there?"

"They hit the National Guard Armory and moved on."

"Where is Goodland from here?"

"Straight north of Syracuse on state route 27. They must have cut west after they came south."

"How far is that from here?"

"About 125 miles."

"Well, they seem to be moving west as much as they're moving south, maybe they're headed for Colorado."

"Could be, but maybe they're not, the Sheriff put all Reserve Deputies on alert."

"What for?"

"He had a request from Hamilton County in case they required mutual aid. They put up a road block on route 27 at the County line."

"Jeremy, have you heard from the Sheriff?"

"Dad, he said we might get called up to provide mutual aid for Hamilton County. Jeb, Abel and John went to town and were deputized. That means that Dan and I, Jason, Jim, John, Don, Ray plus those 3 might get called up."

"Crap, that's going to leave the 3 farms without much of a defense."

"All of the wives are armed and there's you 4 old vets, plus the kids. Look, we don't really expect a call up and even if we go, that leaves close to 20 people on the farms."

"Not counting the day workers."

"It's not like you're totally defenseless. You have 2 M2HBs, 4 M240s and 8 of the M249s plus 8 those M203s."

"Gunny, do you feel like being a DI for a day?"

"What did you have in mind?"

"Just getting everyone checked out on the weapons, the weeding can wait."

"Marilyn and Rachel are going to kill us, they have people washing jars and weeding the gardens."

"How many people from town do you think we have altogether?"

"Maybe 120. We have enough weapons, but might be a bit short on the 7.62x39mm ammo," Gunny suggested.

"We are not; I bought 20 cases of that Wolf junk back in '17. That's at least enough for a little practice and a complete load out for all of the weapons we captured."

"Wolf? That's Russian, where did you find that?"

"In Garden City. He had 20 cases and I bought him out."

"They probably haven't imported it for 10 or 12 years."

"I know, so what, if it shoots, it shoots. I stored it in spam cans with desiccants."

"Hell, I thought those cans contained the armor piecing loads."

"Not hardly. I'd have told you when we need to use the ammo."

"What if you weren't here?"

"It's our place, why wouldn't I be here?"

"I don't know, why wouldn't you be?"

"All you'd have to do is open the cans and look, Gunny."

"All right, let's get the people rounded up on and on the range for a quick training session."

o

"What are you guys doing?"

"Borrowing the work crews so we can train them on the weapons we have."

"Are we expecting trouble?"

"June, the reserves are on standby and if they get called up, it's all we have to defend the farms."

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 22

"The odds of that happening are..." I stopped, after Yellowstone erupted, quoting odds seemed futile. Dan was right, if that group showed up here, our trained people would be off manning some roadblock. Marilyn, Rachel and I were well trained on the M16s and M1As. I almost uttered the DI's, kindest saying, "If you got 'em, light 'em."

"Marilyn, get your guns, we're going to the range and tighten those groups up."

"Rachel," Marilyn called, "We're going to play soldier again, get your stuff."

I noticed that the sights weren't as sharp as they once were, age had gotten my eyes.

"That's bullseye is dancing around some," Marilyn commented.

"I noticed that, it's probably the wind. Want me to switch the targets to silhouettes?"

"That and paste the face of a FEMA guy on them," Rachel suggested.

We spent the better part of 3 hours on the range and cleared it just as the fellas brought the workers to the range to practice using the weapons. Some had their own; they heard the news too and remembered the attack back in '17 that almost got them involved. By the time we were done, we'd all settled on the M16s, we couldn't handle the recoil from the M1As anymore. We'd also shot the handguns, shooting at 2 ranges, 50' and 7 yards. Rachel primarily practiced headshots, if we went up against anyone wearing body armor, why waste 2 bullets.

Ready, no, not by a long shot; adequately proficient on the firearms, yes. It made more sense to take them to the basement and teach them to use the equipment. We warmed the equipment and I showed them how to run through the automatic calibration steps on the lab machines. I drew samples of our blood and we analyzed those, just for practice. Then we did slides and I showed them what to look for, e.g., prominent leukocytes, which might indicate an infection. It was nothing I could teach in a few hours, but they did get to the point where they could run the lab machines.

o

"Are we going to be able to get back to work tomorrow?"

"June, we did what we could and most of them were already familiar with weapons. We concentrated on eliminating bad habits and safety procedures. Some of them had time in one of the branches of the military and all they needed was a little practice."

"After we came back from the range, I took Marilyn and Rachel to the basement and tried to get them up to speed on the lab equipment. I noticed that one of the slides indicated lymphocytic leukemia. I ran a differential white blood count and confirmed the re-

sults but can't run further tests."

"Is it you?"

"Rachel."

"What are you going to do?"

"I suggested that she might have an infection because of her raised white blood count and she's going to the doctor in Lakin tomorrow."

"Can it be treated?"

"Perhaps, with a clinical trial of chemotherapy with stem cell transplant. I'm not a doctor, Dan. The disease, assuming I'm correct, has various stages, all the way up to and including chronic. Stage 1 is what some call the wait and watch stage."

"What are we going to do if we do end up with wounded?"

"Stabilize and maintain. Get them to the hospital in Lakin ASAP, which is exactly what I was trained to do."

"Then why bother to train Rachel and Marilyn on the lab machines?"

"To get their thoughts off a possible fight and thinking about what we could do if one happened."

"What's for supper?"

"I have baking potatoes in the oven and thought we'd have Ribeyes with mushrooms."

"Sounds very good, do you want a drink?"

"It has been a long day, make me an old fashioned."

Maybe I did drink a tiny bit more now, but we weren't exactly short of liquor, especially bourbon. There wasn't much loose money running around Lakin and Kearny County and we'd only sold ~100 cases. Once it's in the bottle, it doesn't go bad, so we could easily afford to store it. It was stored in the Quonset hut with the guns and ammo, what a lark, bullets and booze.

o

"I guess I'm not as young as I once was."

"Older, but better. Want bacon and eggs for breakfast?"

"Sounds good. We have to cultivate the garden for you today."

"How does it look?"

"Better than I thought it would, quite frankly, but not like back in '17."

"What about your crops?"

"The grass crops are doing very well. The corn and beans won't set any records, probably 40 and 130."

"It is getting warmer though."

"I agree; we could get a few 80° days in August. Within 6 or 7 years, we should be back to normal, weather-wise."

"How much of the work are you doing with horses?"

"From here on out, the only thing we're planning on using the tractors for is plowing."

"But they're both still good, right? The Ford is rebuilt and the Massey hasn't given you any problems."

"That's true, June. Parts are becoming a real problem and if anything major breaks, the tractors will be history. If you hadn't found that guy to repair the Ford, we'd have lost it a couple of years back."

"Can we still farm a section of ground if we have to do it solely with horses?"

"We've managed to get enough of the riding plows that we can do that yes. The downside to farming 'the good old way' is the lowered yields; manure doesn't really replace anhydrous ammonia. All the top yields came from using hybrid seeds."

o

"Any word on that group, Gunny?"

"They hit Sharon Springs late last night."

"Where's that, I don't have a map handy?"

"Next town south on state 27. They can either turn east or west on US 40 or continue south on state 27."

"Did you get the garden plowed?"

"Don did it, but it's done. Marilyn is going to town with Rachel today, something about a blood test they ran."

"June said she had a high white blood count and suggested she get a doctor to check it out."

"I'm not so sure those people up in Sharon Springs will ever get this far."

"Why not Gunny?"

"They have to run a terrible gauntlet to get this far. They'll be waiting for them at the Greeley County line and I can't believe they'll ever make it into Hamilton County."

"That's just another spot on the road. How will that be any different than any other place?"

"Because, that's where they plan to put the tanks."

"What tanks?"

They brought in the 149th Armor Brigade from Kentucky; it is part of the 35th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The unit is the 1-123rd Armor Regiment. They brought in 2 Troops."

"Who is 'they'?"

"Oh, the Governor's worked together on this. Got to stop this bunch, you know. Way too many people dead or hurt as it is."

"All over the world."

"You know something I don't?"

"Back in '17 when June and I were on the way to town, she suggested that the 4 Horsemen might have already come and we were in the 1,000 years of Tribulation."

"For what it's worth, it doesn't matter now does it, we'll never live that long. I don't know when all that's going to happen and neither does anyone else. If you knew your Bible, you'd know that in Matthew 24, verses 32-34, Jesus talked about the End of Times. He said, ... *this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But of that day and hour, no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

"It happens when it happens?"

"Hell, Dan, you've seen combat and you know that one minute you can be tooling down the road and the next minute your Hummer is a pile of rubble, up armoring notwithstanding. You're born, you live and you die and whatever happens from the beginning to the end are just circumstances."

"Tanks, huh?"

"Not the newest version, they have M1A2SEPs, the same as we saw in Iraq."

o

"Gunny says the Governor brought in a National Guard Armor unit. They hit Sharon Springs last night and the tanks will be waiting at the Hamilton County line."

"Tanks against infantry?"

"The Marines had the M1028 canister rounds late in Operation Iraqi Freedom. They're standard issue now for all tank units, Army and Marine."

"So, if they show up and open fire, they're dead."

"They don't have to continue south on state 27, they could just as easily go east or west on US 40."

"And they could cross over on 40 to route 25, couldn't they?"

"I suppose, why?"

"If they turned south on 25, that would take them through Leoti and then on to our place."

"Son-of a bi...."

"Don't say it Dan, we'll have to call Big Jake and warn them there's a possibility of they're coming that way."

"I'm already dialing, June. Could you get me a drink, please?"

I got him a beer, but I think he wanted a glass of bourbon. I was beginning to see what my mother was talking about when she described the paranoia that gripped the area back in '59. I knew I couldn't keep my weight at 107, when I weighed this morning I was up to 109. A couple of more pounds and I'd be back to wearing my size 5 clothes.

"Did you get him?"

"Yes, that new Sheriff they have organized a local militia. He also put into a call to our

Sheriff for mutual assistance if the group turns east on 40 and south on 25. Either way, it would seem that Kearny County is going to be involved."

"What else did you and Gunny talk about?"

"Well, he disputed your assertion that the 4 Horsemen have come. He cited Matthew..."

"Chapter 24, verse 36, "Only the Father knows the day and hour."

"You knew about that? And still you quoted Revelations."

"Right, the 4 Horsemen come at the beginning, not the end."

"We won't be alive to see it, June."

"No, Dan, we won't. But the point is the first Horseman is seen as the Anti-Christ. According to Revelations, the Anti-Christ will keep things stirred up for the entire period at the direction of Satan."

o

I didn't do religion with the intensity June did. Among Methodists, it's an individual thing, with some bordering on being evangelical, like June, and some getting far less worked up about it, like me. She hated to miss church and I figured if we made it good, but if we didn't, God knew what kept us away. Har Megiddo, literally Mt. Megiddo over looked a major trade route in the Middle East several thousand years ago and was the site of many battles. Corruption of the terms made it Harmegiddo and later Armageddon. It was supposed to be the finally battle between good and evil and good would win. One thing I knew for sure, it wasn't worth arguing over, not with my wife.

She did have a point; times had definitely been very bad during the 21st century. Even before the century began, there was the Y2K scare. We'd barely gotten started and 9/11 had happened, beginning the War on Terror. Word was bin Laden was dead, and we had fought for about 6 years trying to win an unwinnable war. The Pandemic of '08 had from outstripped the Pandemic of '18, ninety years earlier and just when it looked like it was all over, we pushed the Chinese too hard and had the war that probably would end all wars.

The years that followed were a period of very unusual climate and just when we finally had a laudable year, Yellowstone blew up, despite the geologists' claims that it couldn't happen. In that, Hank had been right, the climate was slowly clearing. If we could just past this latest bit of trouble, I figured we had it made. Gunny was keeping an eye on the developing events and our people were ready if the need arose. Two tank Troops? The odds were on our side.

o

Three days later, June and I sat down to catch the 10 o'clock news.

The just in... After more than a week of concerted effort by law enforcement officers in 2 states and National Guard Units from at least 3 states, the group terrorizing southern Nebraska and western Kansas has been stopped. Earlier today, 2 tank troops and deputies from the Greeley, Hamilton and Kearny County Sheriff's Departments positioned themselves north of Tribune on the junction of state 27 and County Road N. Advance scouts from the outlaw group apparent spotted the preparations and a cross-Country chase ensued as the gang attempted to circumvent the authorities. News helicopters spotted the group as they moved east on County Road N. Law enforcement gave chase while the tank troops repositioned themselves along state route 96 at the junctions of county roads 1707 and 24.

Eventually the group found itself hemmed in with law enforcement at its rear and tank Platoons cutting off escape to the south. Law enforcement authorities held back, allowing the Platoons to use antipersonnel rounds against the group who were armed with a mixture of small arms including weapons taken from an armory in Goodland. According to a National Guard spokesman, the tanks were firing M1028 canister rounds containing approximately 1,100 projectiles. The Troops, consisting of 3 Platoons of 4 tanks each, fired multiple rounds of the canister ammunition and HEAT rounds against the opposition vehicles.

As the force broke into chaos, the tanks advanced, crushing vehicles on the narrow County Road 24. Tank commanders also utilized the M2HB .50 caliber machineguns to fire into the gang. When the melee concluded, few survivors of the gang of desperados were still living. Local authorities then moved into to secure the scene and render aid to any surviving gangsters.

This reporter wonders if such a display of force was necessary. Could not the Guard and law enforcement simply confronted the individuals and negotiated a surrender?

"That's a relief; all we have to worry about are the garden and the crops."

"This is getting old, June. It's the same as back in '17, we get a good crop year following a period of food shortages and we start worrying about people with guns."

"What did you expect, Dan?"

"I don't really know what I expected, something else, that's for sure. I guess I was thinking that now that the weather is improving, things should start getting back to normal."

"Oh I see, you have a set concept in your mind of what 'normal' is, am I close?"

"Well... maybe."

"Let me give you hint lover, there is no such thing as the old normal anymore. When the first 4 seals were opened, things changed. What you expect and what will happen have almost nothing in common. Life will continue just as before with evil being magnified until it is time for Him to return."

"And then what?"

"He will raise the evil dead as an Army against Satan and the Anti-Christ and we'll have the final battle. Well, not us, but our children's children about 30 generations from now."

"I just want to get through life, dear and if I want to hear a sermon, we'll go to church on Sunday."

"You asked."

"My mistake; I'm tired, let's get to bed."

o

"We got lucky this time, my friend, I hope our luck holds."

"Semper Fi. This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless.

"I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than the enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will. My rifle and I know that what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, or the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit.

"My rifle is human, even as I am human, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strengths, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other.

"Before God I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my Country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life.

"So be it, until victory is America's and there is no enemy."

"Yeah right, Gunny. I am an American, fighting in the armed forces which guard my Country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

"I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

"If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

"If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

"When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my Country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

"I will never forget that I am an American, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my Country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America."

"Are you two done now?"

"Gunny was just reciting the Rifleman's Creed and I recited the Code of Conduct. Now that we're done, it's time for a drop or two of something tasty, neat or rocks, Gunny."

"Neat, please."

"Marilyn why did we marry retired soldiers?"

"I had to marry a Marine; no other man could stand up to me. Why did you marry an old warrior?"

"He looked so helpless with his broken wing, I just had to take him home and comfort him. Dan we'll both take an Old Fashioned."

"Yes dear."

Marilyn and Gunny had come over tonight (Saturday) for steaks and a drink. I'd heard that the preacher was really fired up and was going to deliver his best fire and brimstone sermon tomorrow so Dan and I were going to church. He only agreed provided we could have company tonight. Canning the garden produce was coming along very well and Marilyn wanted to talk to me about the percentage of fresh produce we should send to Lakin and Garden City. We'd agreed to send 10% of the harvest fresh and can the rest.

Our husbands had their first drink and started talking soldier talk, one trying to outdo the other. When they went for refills, we wanted a drink too, just for having to put up with it. I'd asked Rachel and Hank, too but they had plans with Ray and Susan. Tom and Elle went to Garden City for dinner and didn't want to cancel their reservations. If you put a

CSM and MGS in the same room, give them a couple of drinks, we'd learned, and the inter-service rivalry usually surfaced.

Since the National Guard had taken on that gang a few weeks back things had been very quiet on the farms. Our reserve deputies were no longer on alert and we collected the weapons from the workers and returned them to the Quonset hut. Because we didn't have a security staff for me to attend to, I usually helped in the canning hut. It was central to all 3 farms and I could be anywhere in a couple of minutes in my Paramedic pickup.

Most of the recent calls had been simple things, someone getting kicked or stepped on by a horse, a cut on an unnoticed sharp edge and sprains, just the usual injuries on 3 large farms. Rachel's examination had confirmed what I suspected, early stage chronic lymphocytic leukemia, the wait and watch stage. The following stages are used for chronic lymphocytic leukemia:

Stage 0

In stage 0 chronic lymphocytic leukemia, there are too many lymphocytes in the blood, but there are no other symptoms of leukemia. Stage 0 chronic lymphocytic leukemia is indolent (slow-growing).

Stage I

In stage I chronic lymphocytic leukemia, there are too many lymphocytes in the blood and the lymph nodes are larger than normal.

Stage II

In stage II chronic lymphocytic leukemia, there are too many lymphocytes in the blood, the liver or spleen is larger than normal, and the lymph nodes may be larger than normal.

Stage III

In stage III chronic lymphocytic leukemia, there are too many lymphocytes in the blood and there are too few red blood cells. The lymph nodes, liver, or spleen may be larger than normal.

Stage IV

In stage IV chronic lymphocytic leukemia, there are too many lymphocytes in the blood and too few platelets. The lymph nodes, liver, or spleen may be larger than normal and there may be too few red blood cells.

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 23

I was wrong, the pastor wasn't preaching fire and brimstone; this was his special hellfire and damnation sermon, most unusual for a Methodist minister. He was getting older, maybe that explained his attitude. We'd had the same minister for a very long time; he'd practically grown up in our church. He had another sermon I liked, *What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine, if I can get it.* [He was Rev. Green and the latter was his favorite.]

We were concerned about Rachel more than really worried; the doctor didn't propose any treatment at this time. It would, eventually, kill her. Unlike bladder cancer which, properly treated, it rarely kills you. About 90 percent of bladder cancers are transitional cell carcinomas, cancers that begin in the cells lining the bladder. Cancer that is confined to the lining of the bladder is called superficial bladder cancer. After treatment, superficial bladder cancer can recur; if this happens, most often it recurs as another superficial cancer. Surgery is a common form of treatment for bladder cancer. Early (superficial) bladder cancer may be treated at the time of diagnosis through a procedure called transurethral resection (TUR). During TUR, the doctor inserts a cystoscope into the bladder through the urethra. The doctor then uses a tool with a small wire loop on the end to remove the cancer or to burn away cancer cells with an electric current (fulguration). TUR requires anesthesia and may be done in the hospital.

I left a ham in the oven on a low setting, circa 275°. We were having that and baked potatoes for Sunday dinner. There would be enough ham left over for sandwiches at supper time. I also had a pistachio salad made with marshmallows and Cool whip. It was mixed in 5 minutes and was chilling and would be ready to eat by the time we got home from church. The recipe made 12 servings. In a large bowl, combine the pineapple and dry pistachio pudding mix. Fold in thawed whipped topping and marshmallows until well mixed. Refrigerate until chilled and serve:

- 1 (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 (3 ounce) package instant pistachio pudding mix
- 1 (8 ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
- ½ (10.5 ounce) package miniature marshmallows

◦

"You knew he was doing that sermon, didn't you?"

"I did not; I thought he was going to preach fire and brimstone, not his special hellfire and damnation sermon."

"You mean there's a difference?"

"Mostly in which fist he shakes. We can have leftovers for supper or we can just pop a pan of popcorn."

"Either sounds good, June. Remind me not to salt the popcorn too heavily if that's what we have, the ham was very salty."

"I noticed that this last batch of hams was like that. If you would rather, we can get fresh hams and picnics next time and buy something like Cure 81 hams if they're available."

"Have you seen Cure 81 hams in the stores?"

"Occasionally, yes."

"Honey, the next time you see them, buy a full case. Fresh ham would make a very nice pork roast, right?"

"Nice, but that would be a very large roast, Dan."

"Couldn't we get them to bone it out and cut into halves?"

"They'll cut it however you want."

"Ok, let's try that this fall, providing you can get the Cure 81s."

Most of a person's life is not filled with dramatic events. You work, eat and sleep with time out for the necessary biological functions like using the toilet, bathing, etc. For farmers, the weather report is more important than the news. However, the news can range from human interest stories to significant announcements. Such was the case on this July night.

With the war back in 2009, we thought we'd heard the end of the Chinese, India and Pakistan. China is a very large Country, some 9,596,960km², only slightly smaller than the US at 9,631,420km². Using July 2006 estimates, China's population was 1,313,973,713 compared to a US population estimate of 298,444,215. Therefore 4.4 times as many people were in a Country 99.6% the size of ours. Primary targets in China would have been their military infrastructure and their industrial centers. While the US probably wouldn't target cities solely to kill civilians, civilians worked in the factories, hence we no doubt did kill civilians in the war.

Similarly, the Chinese targeted our population centers to destroy our manufacturing capacity. They put many of their missiles in tunnels, we used silos. We had something they didn't have many of, ballistic missile submarines. Just one of our subs carried enough firepower to destroy most small countries. The point is that many of the Chinese people survived.

According to the news tonight, surviving Nationalist Chinese from the overrun island of Taiwan, reincorporated into mainland Chinese society, had finally succeeded in gaining control of mainland China politics. It remained to be seen if the US had regained an ally

or had a new enemy. Hopefully the former and the new government was going to be a basic democracy. As a result of constitutional amendments approved by National Assembly in June 2005, the number of seats in legislature was reduced from 225 to 113 beginning with election in 2007; amendments also eliminated National Assembly thus giving Taiwan a unicameral legislature.

Debate on Taiwan independence had become acceptable within the mainstream of domestic politics on Taiwan; political liberalization and the increased representation of opposition parties in Taiwan's legislature have opened public debate on the island's national identity; a broad popular consensus had developed that Taiwan currently enjoyed de facto independence and – whatever the ultimate outcome regarding reunification or independence – that Taiwan's people must have the deciding voice; advocates of Taiwan independence oppose the stand that the island will eventually unify with mainland China; goals of the Taiwan independence movement include establishing a sovereign nation on Taiwan and entering the UN; other organizations supporting Taiwan independence include the World United Formosans for Independence and the Organization for Taiwan Nation Building.

That ended, temporarily when China was allowed to overrun Taiwan in 2009. Prior to that time, Taiwan had a dynamic capitalist economy with gradually decreasing guidance of investment and foreign trade by government authorities. In keeping with this trend, some large, government-owned banks and industrial firms were being privatized. Exports have provided the primary impetus for industrialization. The trade surplus was substantial, and foreign reserves were the world's third largest. Agriculture contributes less than 2% to GDP, down from 32% in 1952. Taiwan was a major investor throughout Southeast Asia. China had overtaken the US to become Taiwan's largest export market and, in 2005, Taiwan's third-largest source of imports after Japan and the US. Taiwan has benefited from cross-Strait economic integration and a sharp increase in world demand to achieve substantial growth in its export sector and a seven-year-high real GDP growth of 6.1% in 2004. However, excess inventory, higher international oil prices, and rising interest rates dampened consumption in developed markets, and GDP growth dropped to 3.8% in 2005. The service sector, which accounted for 69% of Taiwan's GDP, had continued to expand, while unemployment and inflation rates had declined.

In response to the emerging new government, the CIS was proposing opening new lines of trade with the Chinese. The Russians, in particular had a very bad time because when China attacked the US, they also lobbied a few towards Russia. Russia, with a total area of 17,075,200km² and a population of 142,893,540 (July 2006 est.), was the largest Country in the world in terms of area but unfavorably located in relation to major sea lanes of the world; despite its size, much of the Country lacks proper soils and climates (either too cold or too dry) for agriculture. China had what Russia needed, food, and Russia had what the Chinese needed, raw materials and industry, especially the former.

Because of what happened in 2009, the Russians and Americans found themselves in the same sinking boat. Both countries were well on the way to recovering from the war

when Yellowstone erupted. We essentially had the same problems, but Russia being further north, was more affected by the climate change. A person didn't have to have Einstein's IQ to imagine what the eruption did to the Russian weather. If Europe was a basket case, the only thing Russia lacked was the basket. Scenes shown on TV looked like winter scenes from Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. (Tolstoy's other major work was *Anna Karenina*. Don't confuse Leo Tolstoy with Leon Trotsky who was killed in México City on August 20, 1940 when attacked in his home by a Stalinist agent, Ramón Mercader, who drove the pick of an ice axe into Trotsky's skull.)

◦

In 1929, the International Astronomical Union defined the edges of the 88 official constellations. The edge established between Pisces and Aquarius locates the beginning of the Aquarian Age around the year 2600.

Vedic Cosmologist Patrizia Norelli-Bachete in *The Gnostic Circle* (1972) writes, believing that modern astrologers are wrong, that the Age of Aquarius began in 1926. Ages are believed by some to affect mankind. For Aquarius, it is reported we have already been feeling influences (entitled Orb of Influence) in the accelerated individual, social, cultural, scientific and technological development and globalization through the 20th century.

On the other hand, the Aquarian Age is thought to bring with it an era of universal brotherhood rooted in reason where it will be possible to solve social problems in a manner equitable to all and with greater opportunity for intellectual and spiritual improvement, since Aquarius is an airy, scientific, and intellectual sign and its ruler planet, Uranus, is associated with intuition (knowledge above reason) and direct perceptions of the heart; and on the mundane level it rules electricity and technology.

Eastern astrology associates the Age of Pisces with the yin; i.e., spirituality and intuition. Aquarius, on the other hand represents the yang, with its emphasis on rationality and high technology.

In popular culture, the expression *Age of Aquarius* usually refers to the heyday of the hippie and New Age Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The New Age Movement is more accurately a phenomenon, not a movement, and yet seen by many as the harbinger of this future change-over of values.

This "New Age" phenomenon is seen by astrologers to be marked by the conjunction of the planet Uranus, ruler of the sign Aquarius, and the coming age, with Pluto, ruler of the masses, bringing radical change, in the 1960's. However, as the song relates, it is only considered by Astrologers as *the dawning of the age*, not occurring until sometime in the future.

Although more rock than new age in genre, the 1967 successful musical *Hair*, with its opening song *Aquarius* and the memorable line *This is the dawning of the age of Aquar-*

ius, brought the Aquarian Age concept to the attention of a huge worldwide audience.

According to the Esoteric Christian tradition, Essenian and later Rosicrucian, the proximity and entrance in the Age of Aquarius – occurring after the present Age of Pisces (or age ruled by the "Sword") - will bring to the majority of human beings the discovery, true living and real knowledge of the inner and deeper Christian teachings which the Christ spoke of in Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10. This age is regarded as an intermediary preparation toward the Christ in the etheric plane, the New Galilee: the *new heavens and a new earth* to come in a future not identified time. In the Aquarian age at hand it is expected a great spiritual Teacher to come (*is coming*), through the school which works as herald of this age, in order *to give the Christian Religion impetus in a new direction*.

◦

Most of us have seen Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments*. Moses dared not look upon the face of God, the Light was too bright. Interesting because the voice of God in the movie was none other than the voice of Charlton Heston. That's right folks, God loves Guns. But he has rules about what you can use them for, see rule 6. Do you think he likes Wayne what's-his-name? Why couldn't Moses go into Israel? When God said to Moses that he must die Moses replied: *Must I die now, after all the trouble I have had with the people? I have beheld their sufferings; why should I not also behold their joys? Thou hast written in the Torah: 'At his day thou shalt give him his hire'; why dost thou not give me the reward of my toil?* God assured him that he should receive his reward in the future world. Moses then asked why he must die at all, whereupon God enumerated some of the sins for which he had deserved death, one of them being the murder of the Egyptian. Anyway, that's the Jewish version of Moses' death. Maybe he just had Alzheimer's Disease.

Considerable controversy exists over who supplied the voice of God for the film, for which no on-screen credit is given. The voice used was heavily modified and mixed with other sound effects, making identification extremely difficult. Various people have either claimed or been rumored to have supplied the voice: Cecile B. DeMille himself (he narrated the film), Charlton Heston and Delos Jewkes, to name a few. DeMille's publicist and biographer Donald Hayne maintains that Heston provided the voice of God at the burning bush, but he himself provided the voice of God giving the commandments. In the 2004 DVD release, Heston in an interview admitted that he was the voice of God.

That's the background for what was going to happen next. The Ringmaster who became President who became the son of Pharaoh who became John the Baptist and Michelangelo in the same year and then A Man for All Seasons finally got a real job, working for the NRA. He went to British Columbia to promote guns, arguing it is man's *God-given right to own guns*, I guess he should know. I'll let you in on a little secret; God's favorite food is peanut butter, when he remembers.

◦

That old TV show, *The Unit* had shown on TV until the war and then when TV finally came back went into syndication. There weren't any new shows coming out of Hollywood or anywhere else and stations were reduced to filling their air time with anything they could find on DVDs (syndication). One of the episodes I liked was from the first season, SERE., the acronym for Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape. The show was based on allegations made in the media. In July 2005 an article in the New Yorker magazine alleged that SERE staff had been advising the military at Guantanamo Bay and other sites on interrogation techniques.

According to a November 12, 2005, New York Times op-ed column by law professors Gregg Bloche and Jonathan H. Marks, the Pentagon "flipped SERE's teachings on their head, mining the program not for resistance techniques but for interrogation methods. At a June 2004 briefing, the chief of the US Southern Command, Gen. James T. Hill, said a team from Guantánamo went up to our SERE school and developed a list of techniques for high-profile, high-value detainees. General Hill had sent this list – which included prolonged isolation and sleep deprivation, stress positions, physical assault and the exploitation of detainees' phobias – to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who approved most of the tactics in December 2002." The SERE program's chief psychologist, Col. Morgan Banks, issued guidance in early 2003 for the "behavioral science consultants" who helped to devise Guantánamo's interrogation strategy although he has emphatically denied that he had advocated the use of SERE counter-resistance techniques to break down detainees.

If it's true, the guys ought to get a medal. I'm also glad everyone denied it, to admit it would give aid and comfort to our enemy. Just thought I ought to mention that, the insurgents didn't play fair either. Geneva used to be a city in Switzerland where they used to make agreements that nobody followed. While the US adopted the Conventions, we made exclusions. And then changed the definitions.

◦

According to the TV news, the Chinese and Russians might become trading partners, what was new about that? Russia could export steel and the Chinese could build tanks for them, they're good at that. I can just see the Russians eating rice!

It was replacement and restocking time. Dan was assuming the weather would continue to improve, but all it would take is a bad rainstorm or hail and our unharvested crops could disappear in the blink of an eye. Or we could get a tornado cutting a long swath and get serious damage. You don't count your chickens before they hatch and the corn, soybeans and wheat didn't mean anything until they were safely tucked in the granaries. This would be our first crop in 3 years after all. As the canning progressed and we started to use up the canning jars and lids we were gaining a sense of relief. We had the first cutting of alfalfa and of timothy. Timothy was only good for one more cutting and alfalfa could be 2 and even 3, but we weren't counting on that.

Aside from a few minor farm injuries I didn't have to treat anything serious and no one

lost any time from work. I kept my eye out for the hams Dan wanted and when one grocery had them in their ad at regular price, I made a quick run to Garden City and persuaded the meat manager to sell me a full case. Now all we had to cure when we butchered was the bacon.

I noticed that some of the shelves were well stocked with those special items you can never have too much of, like tp, and loaded the back of my pickup. Our next day off was Saturday and I told the girls to get their lists ready and we filled up the big truck. I knew Rachel would complain; we weren't expecting any emergencies. Marilyn, on the other hand never complained, she just stocked up.

I really like farming except when the wind is out of the east. Our homestead is on the west side of the section and when the wind changes, we have to endure the waste from 1,000 hogs, 250 cattle and 150 horses. Thank God the prevailing wind is out of the west and we market the hogs early. As soon as the last cutting of the grasses was done, they began to spread the manure and plowing, using the Clydesdales for that for the very first time. Using 3 2-bottom riding plows they turned the soil nearly as fast as with a tractor and a 3 bottom plow.

We harvested the potatoes, not a bumper crop, about 200 bags per acre. The only thing left in the garden was the squash and pumpkins and the latter were a lot of work to process and can. We began to fill those granaries, again not a year for bumper crops, it would be a stretch to say we got 40 bushels of beans per acre; the corn went about 100 and the wheat almost 30. The only thing we had more than enough of was hay.

"Did you get coal and propane, June?"

"Propane, no coal. I ordered 100 cords of wood. Even the price of wood was up, demand was above supply."

"We can burn the cobs when the corn is shelled. If I could figure out how to palletize them, we could feed those in the stoker."

"Call the extension service; they may know where we can get a pelletizer."

According to the guy at the Extension Service, pelletized cobs had about as much heat as wood pellets and he knew where we could get a machine that pelletized the cobs. One machine would be enough to handle all of our cobs so we wouldn't need 3 machines.

The corn in previous years came out of the field as shell corn, but this year, we used a horse drawn corn picker, which gave us cob corn. We'd gotten the fella with the truck mounted corn sheller out and now had a huge pile of cobs. I talked it over with Gunny and Hank and we decided to buy a used pelletizer. We wouldn't have enough cobs to get through the winter, but with the bit of leftover coal we had, we'd be well into the new year before we were burning wood.

o

"How have we done so far, honey?"

"For the first year after the eruption that we could grow anything, not bad. I helped Marilyn can this year and while we didn't run out of jars, I'd say not half bad. Next year we think we're going to let the girls take over our jobs and we'll take care of the grandchildren."

"It is getting to be that time, isn't it?"

"What time?"

"It's time to hang up the guns and let the younger generation take over fulltime."

"I can't quite visualize you sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch, Dan."

"I haven't had much time to go fishing or to kick back and enjoy the fruits of our labor since we got married."

"It has been a long five years, hasn't it?"

"Not really too bad, one shoot-'em-up and one volcanic eruption. You sure don't look like you're 58, but I'm beginning to feel every one of my 61 years."

"Flattery will get you everywhere."

"Aw, I was looking forward to the drink first."

"We'll have the drink; I wanted to talk to you about Christmas anyway."

"Presents, you mean?"

"Yes, what do you get people who have most everything anyone could ever want and enough money to buy what they don't have?"

"I already have a few things put up June."

"Really, what?"

"The fella that runs that sporting goods store in Garden City is planning on retiring and he was having a clearance sale. He was dragging all kinds of stuff he didn't even realize he had and basically selling at his cost just to get rid of it."

"Ok, ok, but what did you buy?"

"Compound bows, recurve bows and dozens of boxes of arrows. I cleaned out his archery supplies. There are various draw weights so I have something for everyone. There are lots of spare parts for the broad heads, extra bowstrings, and all the accessories he carried. And like I said, I got it for cost; he just wanted to clear the stuff out."

"Are we going to get to the day where our only means of defense is bows and arrows?"

"Not for a long time, but bow hunting is a fun sport."

"What else did he have?"

"Guns, ammo and camping equipment and it included a full line of Coleman products."

"All of it on sale?"

"Most of it."

"Hmm, I think the girls and I are going shopping tomorrow."

"That will be fine; we were talking about going fishing."

"This late in the year?"

"We don't have gear; we were going fishing for that. I need everything again, a new tackle box, rods, reels, line and lures."

"What kind of fishing do you like to do?"

"Bait casting, spinning and fly fishing."

"What kinds of reels?"

"Mitchell and Penn was what I used to use. I like the Mitchell best for spinning and Penn makes some very good bait casting reels."

"What about the fly reels?"

"Line holders, nothing more, any brand will do. The important thing is the rod and the line."

"Why don't I see about rods and reels for Christmas and you can get a tackle box and whatever lures you like?"

o

I called Marilyn and filled her in on our shopping trip tomorrow. I asked her to pump Gunny about the rods and reels and to call Rachel and get her to do the same thing to Hank. Each of them were to tell her mate we'd get them rods and reels for Christmas and they should limit themselves to acquiring and equipping tackle boxes. We lacked mobility; it didn't make much sense on having tons of camping gear because we were tied to the land. However, if we were now talking about retirement, some of those things might make more sense. Besides, it was a sale.

There had to be something left of this Country to see. I sort of figured Yellowstone was off the list of places to visit, but there was Big Bend National Park and plenty to see in the southern tier of states. Winter would be a good time to visit some of those places. We had good pickups that could pull tent trailers or small camping trailers. We might take our horses, but that would get complicated. If we got tent trailers with 2 beds, we could get by with 2 trailers and then could pull 2 horse trailers. Provided we included Tom and Elle in our plans.

Elle had helped Rachel in the gardens this past year while I helped Marilyn in the canning hut. I'm sorry I don't mention her more often, but she was a relative newcomer to our little group that went back the better part of 35 years. I'll get on the phone and talk to her about our shopping trip tomorrow. She can pump Tom about what kind of fishing gear he likes and he can go with the fellas to get their tackle boxes.

It wasn't like Jim and Mary were living here anymore; they were married and had their own families that occupied their free time. I still did the big family dinners, I guess that it's one of the things that grandmothers are expected to do, but eventually Julia and Mary would be the grandmothers themselves and I could establish the family tradition. They had to divide their time between their spouse's families and this family, so we were getting in the habit of trading off Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The thing is, farming with livestock is a 7-day work week and the cows have to be milked when you have dairy cows. It is a 14-hour a day, 7 days a week, 12 months a year job. I suppose that's why you'll find that many dairy farmers with large herds and good sized farms have hired help, so they can get some time off. With a herd of 40 cows, you get about 800 gallons of milk a day and the creamery doesn't pick up on weekends so you have to have at least a 2,400 gallon stainless steel refrigerated tank to store the milk. Milking is at least a 2 person job that takes about an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening.

A Lady for All Seasons – Chapter 24

That's a hunch, no more, and I admit it. But I felt it as a certainty when I read a column by The Washington Post's E.J. Dionne this week. Dionne was arguing with a fellow liberal who wrote what the Democrats need to do is destroy today's *radical individualism* and replace it with *a politics of a common good*. That's fine, Dionne said, but we need to hear more about *self-interest, rightly understood*.

That phrase made me cringe. It still does.

Self-interest, rightly understood is a fancy-pants way of saying, *I know what is in your interest better than you do*. It is, in my view, a politically stupid and morally diseased position. Democrats, by temperament, are slightly more susceptible to it than Republicans.

I do not mean to condemn Dionne for a phrase. But I will. It reminded me of something written on the very first page of a book that lots of Democrats think is absolutely brilliant, *What's the Matter with Kansas* by Thomas Frank.

In the third paragraph of his book, Frank writes: *People getting their fundamental interests wrong is what American political life is all about*. That, too, is a fancy-pants way of saying: *I know what is in your interest better than you do*.

Frank spends the rest of his book explaining why the people of Kansas go against their obvious self-interest and vote for Republicans and not Democrats. His explanations are fascinating and interesting. His premise is intellectually totalitarian.

That may strike you as a rather extreme denunciation. It is, so I'll explain why, in my view, thinking that you know what is in other people's best interests is perhaps the worst political impulse that good people commonly have.

Actually, that is an easy task because it has already been done for the ages and to perfection by the British historian and essayist Isaiah Berlin. In 1958, he delivered a talk he entitled "Two Concepts of Liberty." It became one of the most influential essays in political philosophy written in English in the 20th century.

There are two kinds of liberty, negative and positive. Negative liberty is freedom *from* things; positive liberty is freedom *to do* certain things. Berlin describes how these notions of liberty have been put to very different uses in history and how each concept attracts a different kind of political soul.

Negative liberty means simply that one is free from interference by the state and others, that one has a zone of liberty and in that zone there can be no interference so long as another's liberty isn't constrained. What you do in the zone of negative liberty is your business.

Positive liberty takes a dim view of simple negative liberty, arguing that it is meaningless

unless a person has a real, positive freedom – the power *to do* vital things. Being left alone, in the world view, is meaningless if you don't have the power *to do* the important things, whatever they may be – get an education, earn a fair wage, live in an alienated society.

Negative liberty is the ethos of classic liberalism, not *liberalism* in the partisan sense that the word is typically used in America today. Its essence is, *I know what's best for me, leave me alone.*

Positive liberty, according to Berlin, is the ethos of idealism and great political dreams. Not content with *leave me alone liberalism*, the positive libertarian thinks people must have the power to do and be certain things in order to be free in *meaningful* ways.

What are those things? Well, they are not things you can know for yourself in your zone of liberty. They are things that were well-understood by great minds like Hegel, Rousseau and Marx. The great impulse of positive liberty is: *I know what is best for you.*

That impulse, in history and in personality, is elitist and, at its worst, totalitarian. It is the impulse that allows Marxists, Communists, theocrats and nationalists to curtail negative liberties and slaughter people – all in the name of their own best interests.

America, of course, is the model community of negative liberty. It's a Country explicitly founded on its principles. Arguments about the exact frontiers of liberty will be infinitely and ferociously debated.

The American political temperament, I think, has been molded over the centuries to have an uncanny ability to sniff out and reject the personality, if not the precise policies, of positive liberty – and its voice, which says: *I know what's best for you.*

Both political parties have impulses in both directions.

Republican policies that echo the voices of positive liberty include public religiosity, laws to have the state and not individuals control abortion, No Child Left Behind and the conquering of Iraq in the name of bringing Iraqis the freedom they didn't know they wanted.

Democrats are more likely to want to regulate what you eat and drink, dismiss the property rights that are infringed by taxation, declare that economic goals are rights or entitlements, and try to legislate more economic equality.

As the quotes from Thomas Frank and E.J. Dionne show, a defining impulse or attitude of many Democrats and liberals today is that Americans, because of evil manipulations by Republicans, do not know what is best for them and the party's job is to show them the light. That is a temperament, and one which is not easily discernible in policy papers and campaign platforms. But voters can smell it a mile away. And lately, they think it stinks.

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Why would we want to vote for a Democrat? Is that Bob Dole's party? I didn't think so. He needed more than a Band-Aid from his war injuries. There is nothing wrong with Kansas, Mr. Frank. Thank you for not being here. I see that you moved to Washington, DC. Were you out with Geraldo trying to report the live detonation of a nuke? We aren't really conservative; we're prohibitionists, Mr. Frank. Make that some of us, the rest of us produce beer, wine and bourbon, illegally. It's ok, Carrie Nation is dead, but they don't have liquor by the drink in Barber County where Medicine Lodge is. We're quite progressive in Kearny County; we've had liquor by the drink since '88 and the best home-made bourbon since '14.

Speaking of which, it was bottling time for another 24 barrels. We had 100 cases left over from '19 and were bottling another 180. Not counting our back stock, which wasn't for sale, we'd have 280 cases to unload. At regular price it sold for \$240 a case, giving us a potential sale of about \$65,000. I told Jason to discount it to \$200 a case if he had to, we needed the space. He worked out something, based on the quantity purchased and cleared an even \$60,000, an average of \$214 a case. I'll bet he had plans for his \$3,000 share. There were still 144 barrels aging according to my spreadsheet and in 2 years we'd be aging 180 barrels.

My spreadsheet went through 2043, with the last bourbon distilled in 2038. I estimated total bourbon sales of \$3.1 million, provided we didn't get caught. If I was still alive in '43, I'd be lucky. The income was reported on the tax returns as miscellaneous corporate receipts; we'd seen *The Untouchables*. We were avoiding the IRS or Kansas Revenue because we hadn't collected and remitted liquor taxes.

o

"Did you find what you wanted for tackle boxes?"

"Yeah, they're very nice. How about you, did you find fishing poles and reels?"

"Well... we did yes and bought sets for everyone. While we were at it we got 2 deluxe tent trailers, 2 four-horse trailers with tack rooms and quite a bit of camping gear."

"Are you planning on going somewhere?"

"You said we were retiring and I thought we might winter in the south. I've always wanted to see some of the National Parks and this might be a good time. I thought we could get 2 couples to pull horse trailers and 2 to pull the tent trailers."

"Tent trailers, that sounds a lot like we'll be roughing it."

"They have stoves, refrigerators, freezers, sinks, toilets and showers. We can fill the toppers with food and carry our tack and a large upright freezer in each horse trailer. I

bought small Coleman generators to power those and the tent trailers. Each tent trailer has a king and a queen sized bed.

o

I sat down and read the owner's manual for the tent trailers. It wasn't a real toilet but a chemical toilet. They carried 2 20 pound bottles of propane and had 20 gallon water tanks. The gray water tank held 6 gallons. June had purchased the optional screened in dining area and the gas grill. Nice setup, as far as it went, but I thought it fell short. We could haul extra propane in one tack room and put a freezer in the other. We could carry food in the back of the pickup, but where oh where would we find fuel? We all had auxiliary tanks but that only gave us 70 gallons and at 15mpg, if we were lucky, we had about 1,000 mile range.

"Did you read the owner's manual on the new tent trailer Gunny?"

"They're better than the tents the Corps uses."

"What kind of mileage do you think we'll get pulling those?"

"Better than Tom and Hank who will be pulling horse trailers."

"I figure maybe 1,000 miles cruising range. That will get us to Texas ok, but can we find fuel?"

"In Texas? You're kidding, right?"

"I'm serious, but I have an idea. If we could find some of those 200 gallon saddle tanks they use on semi tractors, we could mount a pair of them in our pickup beds and haul 400 extra gallons of fuel per pickup."

"400 gallons of fuel must weigh 2,800 pounds, are you sure you want to overload the pickups that much? That would cut our mileage by 10% to 20%."

"One tank at least, Gunny."

"That might make sense, where will you get the tanks and how do you plan to plumb them in?"

"I can get them in Garden City and they don't need to be plumbed in. All we need is a fuel pump and a hose to transfer fuel to our main and auxiliary tanks. One tank would almost quadruple our range."

"How do you propose to divide the people up?"

"Tom was Army same as me so they can stay with us and Hank was a Marine the same

as you so he and Rachel can stay with you."

"Are you planning on taking a little of the mountain dew?"

"Four cases and we can figure a way to carry the beer and a spare keg."

Gunny and I talked it through and we slowly figured it all out. Going to the southern tier of states during the winter is, after all, what retired persons are supposed to do. I wanted to apply the KISS principle to what we did, divide the loads evenly between the vehicles and try to balance the heavier horse trailers by carrying more goods in the pickup towing the tents.

Tom and Elle didn't have horses, but we had more than enough Morgan's. If they wanted to ride something else, Gunny or Hank could provide the horses and the tack.

Kansas only permitted concealed carry by law enforcement officers; therefore Texas had no reciprocity with Kansas on CCWs. If they wouldn't honor our Reserve Deputy badges, we had a problem. It took a few extra bottles of you know what to get the Sheriff to let us keep ours and not be retired. No, he wasn't corrupt, he just liked bourbon and was there any difference between giving him a campaign donation and giving him something more personal? The minute a politician accepted a single cent in campaign contributions, he/she became beholding, if not to an individual, at least to a group. By giving him bourbon, we coughed up \$24 and he felt like he was getting \$240.

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Where is it written that you have to cook turkey on Thanksgiving? That was the result of an advertising campaign. US tradition associates the holiday with a meal held in 1621 by the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims who settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Some of the details of the American Thanksgiving story are myths that developed in the 1890s and early 1900s as part of the effort to forge a common national identity in the aftermath of the Civil War and in the melting pot of new immigrants.

Since 1947, or possibly earlier, the National Turkey Federation has presented the President of the United States with one live turkey and two dressed turkeys. The live turkey is pardoned and lives out the rest of its days on a peaceful farm. While it is commonly held that this tradition began with Harry Truman in 1947, the Truman Library has been unable to find any evidence for this. Still others claim that that the tradition dates back to Abraham Lincoln pardoning his son's pet turkey. Both stories have been quoted in more recent presidential speeches. The use of the turkey for Thanksgiving relates back to Lincoln's nationalization of the holiday in 1863. Since a turkey could feed more than a chicken, those were sent to the troops instead as a more cost effective feast.

Many Americans would say the meal is "incomplete" without cranberry sauce, stuffing, and gravy. Other commonly served dishes include sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green beans or green bean casserole, and a Waldorf salad. For dessert, various pies

are served, particularly pumpkin pie, apple pie and pecan pie. I was going to bake one of the Cure 81 hams. I could have a green bean casserole and candied sweet potatoes and possibly bake a pumpkin pie or two but that was as far as I was going.

"What are you planning on for Thanksgiving?"

"Cure 81 ham."

"Sounds good, are you going to have pistachio salad, mashed potatoes and ham gravy?"

"Uh, I guess so."

"You sure make good deep dish apple pie, dear."

And one deep dish apple pie. I shooed him out of the kitchen before I ended up making 6 salads and dressing. Dan had years to perfect his techniques on Kathryn and he could slip in a suggestion and almost make you feel guilty that you weren't planning on doing it that way.

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"When are we taking this trip?" Gunny asked.

"Fellas, as I understand it, the ladies want to leave in January."

"I don't want to get too far from home without a little protection," Tom said.

"I don't know about the rest of you," I replied, "But I plan to take Winchester rifles and single action revolvers for when we're on horseback and M1As and M16s plus handguns when we're not."

"Small arms only?"

"That's what June and I are taking."

"Well, I don't suppose we'll see the Mexican Army trying to cross the Rio Grande; most of the Mexicans are already on this side of the border. I'm a bit po'd that they don't require them to learn English to become a citizen anymore."

"Nothing has changed, they only learn enough to pass the requirements the government set for citizenship."

"They do not. You used to have to have: a period of continuous residence and physical presence in the United States; residence in a particular USCIS District prior to filing; an ability to read, write, and speak English; a knowledge and understanding of US history

and government; good moral character; attachment to the principles of the US Constitution; and, favorable disposition toward the United States. Amnesty changed that; they just grandfather them in every time the proportion of illegals gets too high."

"Historically, the proportion of illegal aliens has been lower than that of legal aliens. A person who is classified as a guest worker is here on a Visa, hence legal. Anyone here on a Visa may apply for citizenship after they meet the requirements."

This was the type of argument or debate that could go on forever. Legal immigrants who joined the US military forces were essentially green lighted to citizenship after they risked their butts in far off lands, like Iraq. I approved of the proposition because anyone who wanted to be a citizen bad enough that they'd risk getting killed in service to the US ought to be granted citizenship. The INA allows for the awarding of posthumous citizenship to active-duty military personnel who died while serving in the Armed Forces. In addition, surviving family members seeking immigration benefits are given special consideration.

Section 328, INA

This section applies to all members currently serving in the US Armed Forces or those who have already been discharged from service. You may qualify if:

- You have served honorably for a total of one or more years.
- You are a lawful permanent resident.
- You will be filing your application for naturalization while still in service or within six months of being discharged.

Section 329, INA

This section applies to members of the US Armed Forces who serve in active-duty status during authorized periods of conflict as outlined in the INA or any additional period designated by the President in an Executive Order.*

You may qualify if:

- You served honorably in the US Armed Forces during an authorized period of conflict.
- After enlistment, you were lawfully admitted as a permanent resident of the United States, OR at the time of enlistment, reenlistment or induction you were physically present in the United States or a qualifying territory.

The President signed an Executive Order identifying September 11, 2001 and after as an authorized period of conflict. Additional legislation provided additional benefits to members of the military. These benefits went into effect on October 1, 2004.

No fees are charged when you file for naturalization. The naturalization process will be made available overseas to members of the Armed Forces at US embassies, consu-

lates, and where practical, military installations abroad.

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We were going to Texas and tried to find where Houston kicked Santa Anna's butt. San Jacinto is about 20 miles east of Houston. On April 21, 1836 at 4:30 pm the Texas attack began. The Texas army moved quickly and silently across the high-grass plain, then when they were only a few dozen yards away, charged Santa Anna's camp shouting *Remember the Alamo* and *Remember Goliad*, only stopping a few yards from the Méxicans to open fire. Confusion ensued. Santa Anna's army was professional soldiers, but they were trained to fight in ranks, exchanging volleys with their opponents.

They were also ill-prepared and unarmed, at the time of the attack and some were thousands of miles from home. They also were demoralized by their own leader, because at Goliad and the Alamo Santa Anna had flouted the rules of war by executing enemy prisoners en masse. Many Méxican soldiers ran into the marshes along the river. Some of the Méxican army rallied and attempted to push the Texans back, but their training left them ill-equipped to fight well-armed American frontiersmen in hand-to-hand combat. During the battle, Houston was wounded and Santa Anna escaped. In 18 minutes, the Texan army had won, killing over 600 Méxican soldiers and taking 730 prisoners.

The Goliad Campaign was a series of 19th century battles that took place in the Méxican state of Texas in 1836, which ultimately led to the Goliad massacre. After their defeat, the Texans were marched back to Goliad and held as prisoners. On 26 March 1836, at 7P, Portilla received orders from Santa Anna in triplicate to execute the prisoners. At around 8 am on Palm Sunday, 27 March 1836, Colonel Jose Nicolas de la Portilla; commander at Goliad, had the 342 Texans marched out of Fort Defiance into three columns on the Bexar Road, San Patricio Road and the Victoria Road. Urrea wrote: ...wished to elude these orders as far as possible without compromising my personal responsibility.

Once the columns reached their selected location the Méxican soldados formed into two ranks on one side of the captives. The defenseless and unarmed Texans were then fired on point-blank a few hundred yards from the fort. The wounded and dying were then clubbed and stabbed. Those who survived the initial volley were run down by the Méxican cavalry. Fannin's men wounded in the Battle of Coleto were shot or bayoneted where they lay. Colonel Fannin was the last to be executed, after seeing his men butchered. Their bodies were stacked into piles and burned. There were twenty-eight Texans who did manage to escape by feigning death and other means. Three known survivors escaped to Houston's army and were known to participate in the Battle of San Jacinto.

Sam Houston had more than one reason to be angry when he got an Army together and caught up to Santa Anna. I supposed we'd go see the Alamo, again, for the ladies sakes. To get to the battlefield from the north: Take I45 south or 59 south to Beltway 8, Sam Houston Tollway, or continue south to Highway 610. Take Beltway 8 or Loop 610

east, and then south, crossing the Houston Ship Channel. Exit Highway 225 east, Texas Independence Highway, to La Porte. Exit Highway 134, Battleground Road.

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The downside to a tent trailer with 2 couples in it was the general lack of privacy. When Dan told me that Tom and Elle would be doubling with us, I immediately thought of the Mistress of the Dark, again. However, since Dan never paid Elle any particular attention, I decided to talk to her about the issue of privacy. She suggested sitting out for drinks in the evening and the first couple to head to the trailer had use of it exclusively for an hour. Sounded like a plan to me so I shared it with Marilyn.

Thanksgiving went off without a hitch; I had plenty of ham left over. On Black Friday, I went shopping with the girls and we bought clothes and toys for the grandchildren and clothes for the kids. The guys got together and decided who would get which bow. There was a time when cedar target arrows sold for 25¢-50¢ each. These days, you were lucky to find them for \$40 a dozen, in fact you could get fiberglass arrows for the same price. Dan told me that they decided to start the grandchildren off with a quiver and 2 dozen arrows. The kids would get their arrows in boxes, an assortment or target and hunting. Our generation would pass, we had plenty of guns.

The gold and silver bullion coins in circulation were the 0.1, 0.25, 0.50 and 1 ounce gold and silver coins. The silver coins had an official value of \$2.50, \$6.25, \$12.50 and \$25. The gold coins had an official value of \$125, \$312.50, \$625 and \$1,250. While it might sound like a lot, stop and consider that a full tank of fuel, 35 gallons, ran ~\$350. Even at the price we were discounting biodiesel to the County for, \$6 a gallon, a 200-gallon tank of diesel was worth about an ounce of gold.

Because there simply wasn't that much gold around, the US Treasury had begun to print gold certificates, in the usual denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500 and \$1,000, redeemable at any bank for the metal coins and vice-versa. The most commonly seen denomination was the \$5 bill. As a result of all those calamities that wiped out many basic industries, America had become mostly a non-smoking nation. Cigarettes, when you could find them, ran about \$100 a carton. You'd still find the occasional pipe smoker or cigar smoker, but with tobacco running \$25 a can and cheap cigars running about \$3 each, there weren't many of them either.

One might think that with all the experiences we'd had in the past 15 years, a BOB was no longer a necessity. I can tell you one thing, old habits die hard, we all carried them and each had a weapon, an edged tool, a leatherman or its equal, one of those survival knife tubes and a roll of coins. The coins were 4 shiny new one ounce gold coins, \$5,000 in cold, hard cash.

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"Have you decided when we're leaving?"

"Is Monday, January 4th (2021), ok?"

"Sure, are you sure we want to haul a 4 month supply of food?"

"I didn't plan on coming back until spring. Have you fellas about finished loading?"

"I thought so, but if we're not coming back for 4 months, we'd better recheck our supplies."

I took that to mean another keg or two of beer or a case of bourbon. The fellas had been very happy with our selections of rods and reels and I'll have to say that Christmas had been a total success. Jim and John had looked at the bows with a look that I took to mean, "Has it come to this?" It hadn't, but it could; I sensed another war brewing, this one because of México's announcement that it intended to annex some of its former territory. How they could do that, was beyond my understanding, the Mexican Army was another blond joke.

Although none of our children had seen military service, they were very well schooled in military tactics, that's what comes when all of the older generation was retired war dogs. I could still fight too, if it came to it, my 4 years in the Army were well spent. I was hoping it didn't happen, not with us planning on spending time in the southern tier of states. No more adventure; we're retired, thank you.

We left bright and early on Monday January 4th, heading south on US 83, bound for Amarillo. What happened next, our Odyssey, and our kids' trip is another story.

The June Webster Saga – Part III

The Odyssey – Chapter 1

Background:

This is Jim Williams, the son of James Williams and foster son of the late Randy Webster. I've read Randy and June's Journals and since Dan and June took off on January 4, 2021, I decided I'd better keep a journal so when they return, I can fill them in. I imagine I should start with who lives on the 3 farms at this point.

Jason and Karen Ralston. Jason manages our farm. They have 4 children, Jason, Daniel, Robert and Suzanne.

Ray and Susan Johnson Perkins. Ray's family owns the north farm. They have 4 children, Raymond, Michael, Rachel and Julie.

Don and Sandy Perkins Johnson. Don's family owns the middle farm. They have 2 children, Maria and Paul.

John and Mary Williams McCartney. She's my twin sister and they live on the same farm as me and my wife Julia. Their kids were Randy, John and Jacob.

There is of course me and my wife Julia Schmidt Williams. We have 2 children Jim and Sandra.

We have some employees; I'll just mention a few:

Ralph and Johnny Barrows, took care of our 2mw wind turbine

Jeb and Joan Stuart. He works for us.

Abel and April Baker. He works on Don's farm.

John and Sally Hays. He works on Ray's farm.

My foster mother June remarried after Randy was killed, to a retired CSM, Dan Robbins. Don and Sandy's mother remarried too, her new husband was MGS David Jones and he went by Deke or Gunny. Rachel, Ray's mom, had remarried too. She married a 20 year Marine, Hank Williams, no relation. There was also Dan's friend Tom and his wife Elvira (Elle) Jones.

Our elders announced they were retired and they were going to take off on what amounted to a camping trip. They had 2 tent trailers and two horse trailers. Each of the 4 pickups was carrying about 270 gallons of biodiesel, extra propane, food for at least 4 months and no doubt firearms. Ray said they took 4 kegs of beer and I know I saw 4 cases of our illegal homemade bourbon. Allegedly they were going sightseeing and fishing, but with all that liquor, I had to wonder. They could just dump the bourbon into the water and net the fish when they passed out and floated to the top.

According to Dan, they would be visiting the battle sites from the Texas Revolution and some of the National Parks. The only one he'd mentioned was Big Bend National Park about half way between El Paso and Laredo. I checked out the National Park Service website and there aren't a lot of National Parks in Texas. Maybe they'll go to New Orleans to check out the damage from Hurricane Katrina back in 2005, it still wasn't repaired, or perhaps to New México. I just hope they stayed in touch.

Mom called from San Antonio and said they'd seen the Alamo. It wasn't anything like the Alamo in the drawings made of it in 1836. Mom said they were having a good time and probably wouldn't call from every stop. She wasn't sure where they were headed next, maybe Houston or maybe somewhere else. That was maybe a week after they left, and it was her suggestion that I keep this journal. Mary told me she heard from Mom too on the same day, but after, we heard nothing.

Julia told me that when she went to get a ham out of the freezer, there weren't many left. She and I did an inventory of the food that was stored on our farm and found we were short on steaks, ground meat, hot dogs and ham. They'd be eating that and any fish they might be lucky enough to catch. Mom made us keep strict account on the bourbon, it had something to do with reporting the income on the sales so we didn't go to prison for income tax evasion. We were missing 12 cases. If she called, I'd have to ask if she knew where it went.

When Yellowstone let loose, they'd bought up Angus cattle, grain and hay. Dan explained that the available tractors were mostly worn out pieces of junk that needed major repairs and there weren't many parts available. I think it was just an excuse so we could go to horse farming. Randy's old Ford was still in good shape and the Massey less so. We only used them for plowing. The self-propelled combine couldn't be used again because we couldn't get repair parts. We used it to harvest wheat, oats, barley, timothy seed, and the corn. Harvesting the old fashioned way, how we'd finished up when the combine broke down, was a whole lot of work.

I can't believe what we got for Christmas this past year, fishing equipment, clothing and archery equipment. Did they really think that we'd really backslide to the point where our only means of defense was bows and arrows? The toys the kids got were reconditioned antiques.

I figured the first thing we ought to do was fill in the missing food and supply items. Julia and I went to Garden City and bought another case of the Cure 81 hams that they'd gotten in for pre-Easter sales. We didn't really need to replace ground beef because there was so much of it to begin with. They'd butchered dairy cows and added the lean meat to the tallow from the other cattle they butchered and gotten 10% fat, labeled ground sirloin. It could have been leaner, but Mom said the flavor in the meat mostly came from the fat.

I didn't much abide with the feds. About the only thing they were good for was target

practice. It went way back, when my father died in Iraq. It wasn't so much that we didn't need to fight those folks as it was that our approach was, according to Mama, ill conceived. She had a really bad attitude against the guy who started, Bush younger. We were up to our eyeballs in debt and my father went over there because it paid better than stateside duty. Those people blew up his Hummer and killed all 4 of them.

The big fat settlement from the government got us out of debt but didn't leave anything to live on. Mama ended up working second shift and we barely saw her. The government promised free flu vaccine for people who couldn't afford it, like Mama, but they ran out and she caught the bird flu and died. That first place the County put us in we got hit a lot and ran away. That second place was even worse, the man had his hands on my sister all of the time so we split. We asked Randy and June for a dog. I thought if we got a German Sheppard, nobody would abuse us. Shep is getting old now and I was wrong, Randy and June were very good to us.

I never thought I end up being a farmer. Randy started me out on the nasty chores first and I just wanted to get off the farm. Things improved, though and before very long, we wouldn't have left the farm at the point of a gun. We had horses, saddles, our own guns, plenty of clothes and always lots of food on the table. We were treated with respect, it was nice.

Randy wasn't my dad, but he had been a good friend. FEMA shot him down over there near Deerfield. I promised myself I'd get even for my father, mother and Randy. Anyway, they gave us guns and taught us to shoot them. No one would ever put a hand on Mary unless she wanted them to. Mary was fast and accurate, it didn't matter that she carried a 9mm; she could get off the 3 shots in the failure to stop drill in the blink of an eye.

I was sure Mom would call on Valentine's Day, but none of us got a call. I talked it over with Ray and Don and they said that we shouldn't worry unless they didn't come back until the first of May, like they planned to. I don't agree with them, but if the folks are in trouble one person won't be enough to help them. I discussed this with Jason and he told me the 3 of us should go if it came to that and John and he with the help of Jeb, Abel and John will see that they and the other farm hands got the work done.

This was the time of the year when we went over the machinery we planned on using this coming season, making repairs as required. When we finished plowing, the plow was scraped down and the moldboards greased to prevent rust. In late winter, we checked it over and replaced shares and shins, if necessary. The moldboards were nearly new, having been replaced after we turned the ash in.

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The continuing calls by some retired generals for the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have inspired quite a debate about the duty of senior officers in regard to criticism of their superiors and of the US military.

"There is one statement that bothers me more than anything else," former CENTCOM commander and Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni told 60 Minutes. "And that's the idea that when the troops are in combat, everybody has to shut up. Imagine if we put troops in combat with a faulty rifle ... and troops were dying as a result. I can't think anyone would allow that to happen, that would not speak up."

On inspection these comments ring hollow at best, and at worst are deliberately disingenuous.

The fact is that on a regular basis, US troops ARE dying as a result of a "faulty rifle" – specifically, the 5.56mm caliber service rifle M16 and carbine M4 now issued to our warriors in combat.

These weapons are deficient in knockdown power and that deficiency has been known for over 40 years.

That period includes most, if not all, of Zinni's active Marine Corps service and I have yet to hear him publicly "speak up" about it.

To take but one recent example of many: On Sept. 12, 2003, in Ar Ramadi, in the heart of the Sunni triangle, elements of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group engaged enemy forces in a firefight.

An insurgent was struck in the torso by several rounds of 5.56mm ammunition from their M4 carbines. He continued to fire his Kalashnikov and mortally wounded Master Sgt. Kevin Morehead, 33, from Little Rock, Ark.

The engagement continued, with the same insurgent surprising SFC. William Bennett, 35, from Seymour, Tenn., from a hiding place and killing him instantly with a three-round burst to the head and neck. Staff Sgt. Robert Springer, having lost confidence in his M4 carbine, drew a WWII-vintage .45-caliber pistol and killed the insurgent with a single shot.

A close inspection of the enemy's corpse revealed that he had been hit by seven 5.56 rounds in his torso.

It should not have been a surprise. For over 40 years, American warriors have been reporting that enemy soldiers continue to fire their weapons after being hit by multiple 5.56mm bullets.

One of the first such official accounts was the after action report on the December 1965 Ia Drang Valley battle, popularized by the movie and book "We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young." In the report, Col. Harold Moore writes of enemy soldiers surviving multiple hits by 5.56 rounds: *Even after being hit several times in the chest, many continued firing and moving for several more steps before dropping dead.*

The 5.56mm round was adopted because it was lighter than the larger rounds it replaced, meaning troops could carry more ammunition. Defenders have also claimed that the way all bullets yaw and pitch inside the body of the target makes smaller rounds just as deadly.

But the outcomes the bullet produces on the battlefield belie that assertion. The 5.56mm round is not a man-stopper.

During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Maj. Howard Feldmeier reported an Iraqi officer leaving a burning vehicle to charge US troops firing his AK-47. He was hit repeatedly by 5.56mm rounds, but only stopped firing when he ran out of ammunition and Feldmeier's Marines tackled him. "He was quickly carried back to the battalion aid station. The surgeons told (Feldmeier) he certainly died of burns, but not necessarily from the six 5.56mm wounds."

In his book *Black Hawk Down*, about the 1993 Somalia imbroglio, Mark Bowden writes of one soldier's view of the 5.56mm caliber weapon: *The bullet made a small, clean hole, and unless it happened to hit the heart or spine, it wasn't enough to stop a man in his tracks. Howe felt he had to hit a guy five or six times just to get his attention.*

In the briefing *Lessons Learned in Afghanistan*, dated April 2002, the US Army Natick Soldier Center reported: *Soldiers asked for a weapon with a larger round, so it will drop a man with one shot.*

Capt. Philip Treglia reflects in the October 2002 Marine Corps Gazette on his Afghanistan experience in December 2001 by reporting that, *the 5.56mm round will not put a man to the ground with two shots to the chest.* Capt. Treglia's men were trained to fire two bullets into an enemy's chest and if that did not knock him down, they were to shift fire to the head. (Mozambique/Failure to stop Drill)

This is the corrective action implemented in the US military for the impotent 5.56mm service cartridge.

The only question now is how many more Marines and Soldiers will be killed or wounded because they were sent into combat armed with the impotent M16 and M4 before Gen. Zinni and those he alluded to on 60 Minutes demonstrate fidelity to their duty and *speak up on this faulty rifle and carbine?*

The rifle that had seen the shortest service life, the M14, was much preferred over the rifle that had seen the longest service life, the M16.

As we debate the Iraq war here in the US, those of us who are not there, most of us do not get a real sense of what is happening on the ground on a daily basis. However, Larry Johnson at No Quarter gives us a Marine's firsthand account of his tour in western Iraq, as told by email to his dad. The commentary is raw, analytical and non-political,

but still valuable in developing a sense of what is going on over there. I hope everyone takes the time to read this account to appreciate what our very best are up against.

Semper Fi spent 7 months at *Camp Blue Diamond* in Ramada. Aka: Fort Apache. He saw and did a lot and the following is what he told me about weapons, equipment, tactics and other miscellaneous info which may be of interest to you. Nothing is by any means classified. No politics here, just a Marine with a bird's eye view's opinions:

- The M16 rifle: Thumbs down. Chronic jamming problems with the talcum powder like sand over there. The sand is everywhere. Semper Fi says you feel filthy 2 minutes after coming out of the shower. The M4 carbine version is more popular because it's lighter and shorter, but it has jamming problems also. They like the ability to mount the various optical gunsights and weapons lights on the Picatinny rails, but the weapon itself is not great in a desert environment. They all hate the 5.56mm (.223) round. Poor penetration on the cinderblock structure common over there and even torso hits can't be reliably counted on to put the enemy down. Fun fact: Random autopsies on dead insurgents show a high level of opiate use.
- The M249 SAW (squad assault weapon): .223 cal. Drum fed light machine gun. Big thumbs down. Universally considered a POS. Chronic jamming problems, most of which require partial disassembly. (That's fun in the middle of a firefight.)
- The M9 Beretta 9mm: Mixed bag. Good gun, performs well in desert environment; but they all hate the 9mm cartridge. The use of handguns for self-defense is actually fairly common. Same old story on the 9mm: Bad guys hit multiple times and still in the fight.
- Mossberg 12ga. Military shotgun: Works well, used frequently for clearing houses to good effect.
- The M240 Machine Gun: 7.62 NATO (.308) cal. belt fed machine gun, developed to replace the old M-60 (what a beautiful weapon that was!). Thumbs up. Accurate, reliable, and the 7.62 round puts 'em down. Originally developed as a vehicle mounted weapon, more and more are being dismounted and taken into the field by infantry. The 7.62 round chews up the structures over there.
- The M2 .50 cal heavy machine gun: Thumbs way, way up. Ma Deuce is still worth her considerable weight in gold. The ultimate fight stopper, puts their butts in the dirt every time. The most coveted weapon in-theater.
- The .45 pistol: Thumbs up. Still the best pistol round out there. Everybody authorized to carry a sidearm is trying to get their hands on one. With few exceptions, can reliably be expected to put 'em down with a torso hit. The special ops guys (who are doing most of the pistol work) use the HK military model and supposedly love it. The old government model .45's are being re-issued en masse.
- The M14: Thumbs up. They are being re-issued in bulk, mostly in a modified version to

special ops guys. Modifications include lightweight Kevlar stocks and low power red dot or ACOG sights. Very reliable in the sandy environment, and they love the 7.62 round.

- The Barrett .50 cal sniper rifle: Thumbs way up. Spectacular range and accuracy and hits like a freight train. Used frequently to take out vehicle suicide bombers (we actually stop a lot of them) and barricaded enemy. Definitely here to stay.

- The M24 sniper rifle: Thumbs up. Mostly in .308 but some in 300 win mag. Heavily modified Remington 700's. Great performance. Snipers have been used heavily to great effect. Rumor has it that a marine sniper on his third tour in Anbar province has actually exceeded Carlos Hathcock's record for confirmed kills with OVER 100.

- The new body armor: Thumbs up. Relatively light at approx. 6 lbs. and can reliably be expected to soak up small shrapnel and even will stop an AK-47 round. The bad news: Hot as hell to wear, almost unbearable in the summer heat (which averages over 120 degrees). Also, the enemy now goes for head shots whenever possible. All the BS about the "old" body armor making our guys vulnerable to the IED's was a non-starter. The IED explosions are enormous and body armor doesn't make any difference at all in most cases.

- Night Vision and Infrared Equipment: Thumbs way up. Spectacular performance. Our guys see in the dark and own the night, period. Very little enemy action after evening prayers. More and more enemy being whacked at night during movement by our hunter-killer teams. We've all seen the videos.

- Lights: Thumbs up. Most of the weapon mounted and personal lights are Surefire's, and the troops love 'em. Invaluable for night urban operations. Semper Fi carried a \$34 Surefire G2 on a neck lanyard and loved it.

I can't help but notice that most of the good fighting weapons and ordnance are 50 or more years old! With all our technology, it's the WWII and Vietnam era weapons that everybody wants! The infantry fighting is frequent, up close and brutal. No quarter is given or shown.

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I found that on Randy's computer when I was looking for something else. On the trip, the men took M1911s and M1As. The women took M16s and 9mm handguns. Mom also took her .357 Chief's Special and they all had Winchester rifles and revolvers in .45 Colt caliber. I suppose they could use the bourbon they took to make Molotov Cocktails. It had been very quiet now that we could grow food again, and down in Texas, they had excellent growing seasons all of the years after Yellowstone. We were coming up on the 4th summer and we all agreed that we should have a very good year.

Our experience with the M249 hadn't been as bad as reported in the material I found on the computer, perhaps because we kept them clean and didn't have that talcum fine

sand. I also found the comment, 'No quarter is given or shown,' to be most revealing. That's exactly what I had in mind for any feds I ran into. Call, darn it, I'm starting to worry.

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"Heard from them?" Ray asked.

"No. Have you?"

"I haven't either," Don added.

"Why don't the 3 of you take off and go find them?" Jason asked.

"Do you have any idea how big the state of Texas is? It's the second largest state in the union at almost 700,000km². Texas has over 300,000 miles of streets, roads and highways and about 80,000 miles of state maintained highways. How are we going to find 8 people amongst a population of nearly 30 million in a state that's bigger than most countries?"

"I didn't know Texas had that many people," Ray observed.

"Snowbirds. They have lots of them in recent years."

"We know that they were going to follow the Texas Revolution and end up in Big Bend Country. We can either try to follow their path or go to Big Bend."

"Big Bend is over 800,000 acres, more than 1,250mi²."

"They called from San Antonio, so we have a starting point. They would have ended up at the San Jacinto Battleground east of Houston."

"We'd better wait until the middle of May; I wouldn't want to go looking if they weren't overdue," I said.

◦

"Julia, we may have to go looking for the folks if they don't show up or we haven't heard from them by the middle of May."

"How are you going to manage that, Jim?"

"Pull a horse trailer and put a camper shell on a pickup. We can get a couple of those big fuel tanks and put them in one stall in the trailer."

It seems apparent now that México has been invading the United States, albeit slowly.

Ronald Regan provided an Amnesty program back in 1986. Since then, there have been several programs sponsored by several administrations to resolve the problems associated with illegal immigration. NBC will air a special report tonight discussing the plight of America in face of rampant immigration from México. Despite several efforts to seal our borders, none have truly succeeded. Spanish speaking groups now control significant parts of southern California, Arizona and New México. Our show, Nation of Aztlán – Act of War? recounts the history of illegal immigration along our southern border.

Our guests will include Minutemen founder Jim Gilchrist, the organization that has done so much to seal our southern border. Other guests will include leaders from the minority communities. The program airs tonight at 9pm, 8pm Central.

"They didn't mention Texas."

"That's because the population of Texas has included a large proportion of Hispanics since it became a Republic and then a state. More than one-third of the population is Hispanic, and originally, its non-indigenous population was 100% Hispanic."

This was a whole new rub, yet even when I was small, I can remember people talking about illegal immigration. After the flu and the war, it seemed to drop off, but only for a while. More recently, there had been news snippets discussing the issue, but it didn't seem to be much of a problem here in Kansas. There had been numerous border incursions by allegedly Méxican troops, but those could have just as easily been the Méxican drug cartels. Méxican immigration policies were rather restrictive when compared to those of the US. If I understood correctly, the Méxican Military was primarily used as a police force.

As far as I was concerned, feds were feds, be they Americans or from the other side of the border. One thing for sure, if we did have to go to Texas and ended up having to converse with the Hispanic population we were in trouble unless they spoke English. About 25% of the population of Lakin was of Hispanic origin, and we'd never had any racial issues. I supposed many of them worked in the packing plant in Garden City. Nearly 45% of the population of Garden City was of Hispanic origin. I guess I should have learned Spanish in High School.

Back in 2006, the Garden City Telegram carried an article on the Immigration protest of May 1, 2006:

La Chiquita and El Remedio, two well-known, locally owned Latino businesses, are planning to close Monday to show solidarity with the national economic boycott organized by pro-immigration activists.

"I want to support (our) community," said Mario Hiojos, co-owner of La Chiquita. "We're trying to send a message to the (US) Senate and Congress for laws in favor of the immigrants. A lot of people don't understand how much we support the economy. We

spend a lot of money. ... Méxicans buy the most expensive trucks and cars, and we pay taxes. A lot of people don't think we pay taxes, but we do."

Tyson Fresh Meats Inc., Finney County's largest employer, also is planning to shut down its Holcomb plant on Monday, said Paul Karkiainen, the facility's general manager.

"We are not planning to operate," Karkiainen said.

Pro-immigration activists have designated Monday as a day of action, and Latinos across the Country have been encouraged not to go to work and cease from shopping in order to show the impact immigrants have on commerce, and what it would be like without their business or presence in the workforce.

Although there are several organized marches planned across the United States, including in cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Tucson and Phoenix, there are no known protests or parades scheduled in Garden City.

The national boycott and marches are a response to recent debates in Congress regarding the millions of illegal immigrants currently in the Country and the outdated laws that pertain to border problems.

While some favor a guest-worker program that would eventually give illegal immigrants a chance at citizenship, others feel illegal immigrants should be deported and that a fence should be built along the US-México border.

Gary Mickelson, Tyson's director of media relations with the company's headquarters in Springdale, Ark., said that out of the more than 100 Tyson plants, about 12 will close, including nine red meat packing plants, which includes the Holcomb site.

The plants that will close are going to do so because of current market conditions and the number of employees who may not show up to work, Mickelson said.

"Meatpacking has historically attracted immigrants - we provide employment that doesn't require previous experience, very little language skills and competitive pay," Mickelson said, pointing out that a large number of European immigrants worked in meat processing facilities after coming to America at the beginning of the 20th century. "We value the diversity of the workforce at all of our plants."

It hadn't been a big deal in the area when the people protested and it still isn't.

The Odyssey – Chapter 2

It only came to mind, because the Garden City Telegram reprinted the article from the 2006 newspaper. This was the 15th Anniversary of that protest. It didn't really make that much difference anyway, what with the flu coming and then the war. For a while there, the borders were sealed by the military, but that didn't last because it cost too much. Mom should have been back today and she wasn't. This prompted me to take time out and get the horse trailer ready and install a camper shell on my pickup. I used the stall right over the trailer axles to install the 2 200-gallon diesel tanks. I had extra propane for the camper, a 100# bottle, and the weapons would go in the back seat.

On that subject, we were all going to take M1As, M1911s, M16A4s w/M203s and suppressors, Browning Hi-Powers as back up and all the ammo we could carry. Don't forget our cowboy guns, we're taking 3 horses. When our moms had gone shopping at that sale in Garden City, they didn't know when to stop shopping. She had gotten extra generators, Coleman Premium Plus 5000s. Fortunately, they now ran on E85. The camper ran off the battery with a 12 volt system, but I wanted a generator and a 55-gallon drum of E85. The camper included a rectifier and could be run on 110v.

"Ray, this is Jim, I just wanted to let you know that I got the horse trailer ready to go and installed a camper top on my truck. If they aren't back in 2 weeks, we're going looking."

"We aren't taking John?"

"He'll stay here and work with Jason to keep an eye on things. We have Jeb, Abel and John to help them out, plus the other hired hands."

"What kind of Camper did you get?"

"It's called a pickup TopUp Camper. It raises and lowers by the push of a button. It looks like a bed cover until it's raised in place. Setup is quick and we have an 8' by 13' space."

"We aren't taking our wives?"

"On a rescue mission? Are you serious?"

"I hope we're not gone too long."

I guess I should tell you about the used pickup I bought. It was a Dodge Ram 3500 Laramie with the Quad Cab, Cummins Turbo diesel engine and automatic transmission. I had recently replaced the battery, installed a spare alternator and a 12k Warn winch. It had the towing package and dualies on the rear. The tires were nearly new and it had a fuel capacity of 35 gallons plus a 35 gallon under bed auxiliary. That gave us 470 gallons at about 15mpg or about 7,000 miles cruising range, with about 1,000 mile between fill-ups. I had a pump and a hose to handle that.

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I can't remember when I've had so much fun. We called the kids from San Antonio and took off from there and went to Houston and San Jacinto. After that, we drove the few miles to the coast and were planning on following it all the way down to Brownsville and back up the Rio Grande River to Big Bend. Texas had a new coastline, further inland. We wanted to see Padre Island, the National Seashore, but it was under water in many places.

Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself. We fished our way down the coast. The weather was nice and every morning, we'd get up and drive down the coast until we found a good fishing spot. This was surf casting and the men used their heavy duty tackle. They finally figured out that the best fishing time was when the tide was going out. The outgoing tide flushed the baitfish into the ocean where they get confused and the other fish just eat them up. We didn't always want fish, so naturally, some of them made it into the freezer.

I guess we lost track of time, we hadn't called back home and every time we thought about it, we were someplace where there weren't any phones. We didn't make it to Brownsville until late March. We were getting nice tans all around and occasionally we'd find a spot away from the guys and eliminate the suntan lines. In all these years, I'd never been on vacation and I wasn't in any hurry to get home. After we left Brownsville, the fellas wanted to fish the Rio Grande all the way to Big Bend. I suppose that's where the trouble began.

Known as the Rio Grande in the United States and as the Río Bravo (or, more formally, the Río Bravo del Norte) in México, the river, 3,034km (1,885mi) long, rises in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, flows through the San Luis Valley, then south into New Mexico through Albuquerque and Las Cruces to El Paso, on the US-México border. A major tributary, Rio Conchos, enters at Presidio, below El Paso and supplies most of the water in the 2,019 km (1,254 mi) Texas border segment.

The river has, since 1845, marked the boundary between México and the US from the twin cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, to the Gulf of México. As such, it was across this river that Texan slaves fled when seeking their freedom, aided by México's liberal colonization policies and abolitionist stance.

The major international border crossings along the river are Ciudad Juárez and El Paso; Laredo, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; McAllen-Hidalgo, and Reynosa, Tamaulipas; and Brownsville and Matamoros. Other notable border towns are the Texas/Coahuila pairings of Del Rio-Ciudad Acuña and Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras.

The US and México share the waters of this river under a series of agreements administered by the joint US-México Boundary and Water Commission.

We took US 77 back to the junction with US 83 and followed it because it stayed near

the river, most of the way. I'd say it took us about a week to get to Laredo. Once we got there, we got a motel and ate out for a few nights. The fellas wanted to do some shopping in Laredo.

Men and women are different; always have been, always will be. Women, obviously physically different also require six gun leather made to fit their needs and shape. Enter Kirkpatrick Leather and the Lady Tequila custom made for Diamond Dot Taffin. The belt is cut on a curve specifically to fit the female hips. It is also designed to be buckled in the back, so that the back of the belt actually rides in the front and carries eight shotgun shells across the center with five cartridge loops on each side of the shotgun shells and in front the holsters. The holsters hang straight with a three-inch drop from the top of the belt to the body of the holster. For those who prefer one straight drop and one cross-draw, the Lady Tequila is also offered in this configuration. Sometimes, as the years pass, belts have a mysterious way of shrinking. To combat this mystery the Lady Tequila is very easily adjustable as both the buckle and billet are attached to the belt proper with Chicago screws and can be easily replaced with longer versions, or even shorter lengths if desired.

Dan and the other men got something a bit more conventional, the Laredoan Double - Model 1914-D. The problem with the Laredoan Crossdraw – Model 1914-2 was that both holsters were for your strong side. Since we only had 8 revolvers and we ladies got double rigs, we needed more guns. This was the place find handguns, but we were from out of state. Translation – they cost one hell of a lot more. The fellas bought genuine 4⁵/₈" original Vaqueros in the .45 Colt caliber. I think I told you that the guns laws had lightened up some, right?

Back to the trouble. It happened as we were coming out of Brownsville and joining up with US 83. What happened was we grew a tail, two nice looking Hispanic fellas driving, of course, a pickup. From the cut of their clothes, we took them to be ranch hands. They laid back and either stopped when we stopped or if we surprised them, passed us by and camped a little further on. It's only about 205 miles from Brownsville to Laredo, a trip of 3-4 hours that took us several days. We lost track of them when we laid over in Laredo and didn't give it much more thought.

It wasn't until we got to Carrizo Springs, right where US 83 splits off to the north and we continued on local highways where we noticed the same two fellas in a different pickup. I should point out that right then and there; we could have gotten on US 83 and taken it all the way north to Garden City. In hindsight, it would have been a better choice. We stopped as soon as we saw the river again and set up camp. There was a bit of hustle-bustle while the fellas passed out the weapons and said, "Get ready."

Get ready for what, 2 banditos who are going to take on a party of 8, 5 of them military veterans armed to the teeth? Of course, when a person really thinks about it, how would those 2 fellas know that the 4 men and I were trained by the military or that Elle, Marilyn and Rachel could easily take them out at 300 yards? It was time to play cowboy and cowgirl and strap on the new leather. The M1As and M16s were kept in ready reserve.

"Come on you varmints, we're as ready as we can be."

"It's like waiting for a pot of water to boil," Dan grouched.

"Relax Dan; we have 8 people each armed with a pair of revolvers. That will give 'em 96 chances to surrender before we switch to the Winchesters. Then they'll still have another 104 chances to surrender before we switch to the assault weapons. What do you want for supper?"

"How about a ham?"

"Tomorrow night, they're frozen. I thawed out steaks and fish."

"Don't we have some chicken?"

"Did you pack any?"

"No, did you?"

"You're the one who loaded that freezer, not me."

"I just got so tired of chicken and pork chops. Guess I got it wrong, huh? I can fix shrimp; we bought plenty of those on the coast."

"Shrimp on the barbie? Yuck."

If he had told me this morning he wanted ham, I'd have thawed one and divided it 4 ways or just cooked it whole and invited everyone over. I fixed the fish, the steaks would keep for 2 days and tomorrow I'd thaw out the ham and he'd eat ham, or else. The guys decided to lie over for a day and fish so the next morning, I took out the ham and we ladies went riding. We backtracked and spotted the pickup.

"Well girls, do you want to put the reins in your teeth and come out firing both guns?"

"June, you're joking, you never, ever fire a gun from the back of a horse."

"We could tie the horses up and take them Marilyn."

"Fine, but what are we going to do with them once we got them?"

"Let's go, they spotted us," Rachel urged.

"I like the tall one," Elle said.

Yep, it was time to fix my husband whatever he wanted for dinner.

"What's for supper?"

"I fixed ham, escalloped potatoes, peas and a pistachio salad."

"Have a nice ride?"

"Up until we spotted those two vaqueros, yes."

"Are they still following us?"

"They're about a mile back down the road. Elle said she like the tall one."

"Which one did you like?"

"I was ready to shoot them, but Marilyn talked me out of it."

"What's the name of the next town up the road?"

"I think it is Quemado. Why do we need something?"

"Bait."

The next big town was Del Rio and we could board the horses there and stay in a motel for a couple of nights. I didn't know at the time that Del Rio was where Judge Roy Bean is buried, more about him later. It was nice staying in a motel; you didn't have to worry about privacy if you wanted a little romp in the hay. It was also nice not having to cook. This was supposed to be a vacation, but how could it be with us having brought our own food? Even if Dan cooked steaks on the grill, someone still had to make the side dishes. I'm looking forward to getting home and resting up. Still, it was our idea, we ladies, so how could we complain?

Langtry is on Loop 25 off US Highway 90 just north of the Rio Grande and eight miles west of the Pecos River near the southwestern corner of Val Verde County. In 1882 the Southern Pacific line established a grading camp near the Eagle Nest crossing of the Rio Grande to facilitate joining with the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway at the site of Langtry. The camp, at first called Eagle Nest, was renamed in honor of George Langtry, an engineer and foreman who had supervised a Chinese work crew building the railroad. Cezario Torres, one of the original commissioners of Pecos County, and his Torres Manufacturing and Irrigation Company owned most of the land beside the railroad right-of-way in Langtry, but a tent-saloon operator named Roy Bean arrived from another camp and squatted on part of the railroad land.

Torres's unsuccessful attempt to keep Bean out precipitated a long-running rivalry between Bean and Torres's son Jesús. Nonetheless, Bean's establishment immediately attracted numerous railroad workers, and disorder mounted in Langtry. Bean was justice of the peace of Langtry for nearly twenty years, and dozens of legends still circulate

about him. One story has it that he named the town in honor of a beautiful English singer, Emilie (Lillie) Langtry, after he fell in love with her picture in the newspaper. Though he could not have named the town, Bean did call his saloon the Jersey Lilly in honor of the singer.

After the east and west sections of the railroad joined in January 1883, the depot kept business brisk by supplying a constant flow of customers to local saloons and by furnishing a shipping point for agricultural products and supplies. In 1884 the Langtry post office opened, and the town's business interests expanded. W. H. Dodd, a resident and future justice of the peace, reported that by 1892 Langtry had a "population of possibly 150, who lived mostly in tents," as well as Dodd's store, two saloons-one operated by Bean and the other owned by Torres-and the railroad depot and refueling station.

Bean later opened an opera house in anticipation of a visit by Lillie Langtry, who in 1904, only a few months after Bean's death, did actually visit the town. In 1896 the world-championship boxing match between Peter Mahar of Ireland and Bob Fitzsimmons of Australia took place near Langtry through the secret machinations of Roy Bean. Because the state and Mexican governments had prohibited the fight, Bean arranged to hold it on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, knowing the Mexican authorities could not conveniently reach the site. The spectators arrived aboard a chartered train; after a profitable delay contrived by Bean, the crowd witnessed Fitzsimmons's defeat of Mahar.

By 1900 Langtry had become the commercial center for ranching in the area, but soon after Bean's death in 1903 the town began to decline, when the commissioner's court moved the highway slightly north for a more direct route. In 1923 the new owner of the Jersey Lilly discovered that it rested partly on the railroad right-of-way and in 1934 deeded the building-erected after fire destroyed the first one in 1897-to the state. By 1926, when the Southern Pacific moved the railroad tracks, depot, and water tank a half mile away, Langtry's population had dwindled to fifty. In 1939 the Texas Highway Department restored Bean's old saloon-courtroom, and by 1945 Langtry's population had climbed to 100. By the early 1970s the number of residents there had dwindled to around forty, and most of the town, with the exception of the state-owned Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center, was put up for sale by the Dodd family, then residing in San Antonio and Del Rio. Apparently it never sold. Tourism is the town's major industry; in 1981 the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry welcomed its one-millionth visitor, and Langtry continues to attract thousands of visitors each year. In 1990 the population of Langtry was reported as 145.

Lillie Langtry (née Emilie Charlotte Le Breton, nicknamed the Jersey Lily) (13 October 1853 – 12 February 1929) was a British actress and courtesan born on the island of Jersey in 1853. A courtesan is a person paid and or supported for the giving of social companionship and intimate liaisons to one or more partners. The word is generally reserved for those who enjoyed the most social status for such services. Although the term has been applied to people from several cultures and historical periods, it is most applicable for those to whom it was first given: the women of Renaissance Europe who

held a socially recognized, if not quite socially accepted, position as well-compensated companions.

Courtesans played an important role in those days, as they took the place of wives at social functions because wives were often kept at home to prevent their "contamination" by the culture of the day, or often royal wives and their husbands led very separate lives, and had often married simply to insure the continuing of royal bloodlines or to ally with another family socially and/or politically. Very often, these marriages in society circles were arranged, and the husbands (if wealthy enough) would choose a courtesan, while the wives would take a discreet lover also, but not for public display.

Courtesans also provided an outlet for restless husbands and helped bring men back to a "healthy" heterosexuality. In more than one occasion, certain courtesans are described as wielding significant influence on the politics and diplomacy of their lover's office. Almost without exception in the social elite, the wives knew full well about the courtesans, and often were on friendly speaking terms with them.

In summary, Judge Roy Bean, a married man who ran away from his wife and 5 children, was in love with a high priced hooker, who didn't show up in town until he was dead. And, he never hanged anyone, although it is rumored that he threatened to more than once. I'd never seen *The Westerner*, the first movie about Roy Bean starring Walter Brennan as the Judge. I had seen *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* starring Paul Newman. The song was nominated for an Academy Award:

Marmalade, Molasses and Honey
Sung by Andy Williams

*Marmalade, molasses and honey,
Cinnamon and sassafras tea,
They make the morning finger licking and sunny,
Sweet as it can be, pour it over me*

*All the hummingbirds are out humming,
Honeysuckles sway in the breeze,
Feels like a dilly of a day is out coming,
Peaking through the sycamore trees*

*You know what I love to do,
Head for the hills with you,
Maybe we'll climb a few,
Hey! What do you say? Let's make a day of it!*

*Later when the moon is out rising,
Clear across the licorice sky,
I bet you not a single star will be hiding,
And we'll name 'em all, catch 'em if they fall*

*We don't our days filled with money,
As long as we're together they'll be sweeter than
Marmalade, molasses and honey,
Cinnamon and sassafras tea*

*Cinnamon and sassafras tea
"You break his heart, I'll break your face."*

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I thought we lost the Méxicans in Del Rio. I was wrong, we gained 2. Now there were 4 of them in yet another pickup. Once we came out of Langtry, the men decided to make a run for it and drive straight through to Big Bend National Park. It was just a hair over 110 miles from Langtry to Marathon and US 385, the road to Big Bend Country. If we couldn't lose them in an 800,000 acre park, we were more over the hill than we thought.

From the turnoff at Marathon, it was on 39 miles to the park entrance. Once in the Park, we had Rangers to provide some degree of protection. We wanted to go to the hotel, but, the sign said, *Road to the Basin not recommended for trailers longer than 20 feet and RVs over 24 feet because of sharp curves and steep grades.*

We ended up going right through the park and out the west side, and then north and south again, ending up at the campground at Terlingua Ranch. *The Big Bend of Texas is a land of giant bluebonnets, spectacular sunsets, and the largest landscapes in the state; it is also the home of Terlingua Ranch Lodge. Terlingua Ranch is the Big Bend, situated between Big Bend National Park on the east and Big Bend State Park on the west, Terlingua Ranch offers solitude and all the incredible beauty of this unique Country. We invite families and groups to come enjoy the Big Bend desert with us. Pets are also welcome, and remember to bring the leash! Nice advertising, but do horses need leashes?*

We stayed at the campground because we didn't have reservations at the Lodge. They had openings coming up in about a week and space in their campground until then. Boarding the horses was extra, quite a lot extra, but we were hiding in plain sight. They didn't have TVs, phones or anything so we couldn't call home and let the kids know where we were. I got that wrong too, they had phones, just not in the rooms or at the campground. We got a key to the bathhouse as part of our camping fees. It had showers and toilets. The name of their Café was The Bad Rabbit Café.

It was a full service restaurant with a wide variety of sandwiches, appetizers and salads to please any palate. They serve char-broiled burgers, philly cheese steak sandwiches and a variety of pasta dishes. Not the best choices, but we had steaks, shrimp and fish in the freezer. They also let you use their laundry facilities after the staff finished for the day, \$2.00 a load. You could buy quarters at the front desk. We only found out much later that they had phones; the number is (432) 371-2416. Reservations are highly rec-

ommended.

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To the west a ways was Aqua Fria Mountain. There was something about that name.
Then I remembered, *Big Iron*.

*To the town of Agua Fria rode a stranger one fine day
Hardly spoke to folks around him didn't have too much to say
No one dared to ask his business no one dared to make a slip
for the stranger there amongst them had a big iron on his hip
Big iron on his hip*

*It was early in the morning when he rode into the town
He came riding from the south side slowly lookin' all around
He's an outlaw loose and running came the whisper from each lip
And he's here to do some business with the big iron on his hip
big iron on his hip*

*In this town there lived an outlaw by the name of Texas Red
Many men had tried to take him and that many men were dead
He was vicious and a killer though a youth of twenty four
And the notches on his pistol numbered one an nineteen more
One and nineteen more*

*Now the stranger started talking made it plain to folks around
Was an Arizona ranger wouldn't be too long in town
He came here to take an outlaw back alive or maybe dead
And he said it didn't matter he was after Texas Red
After Texas Red*

*Wasn't long before the story was relayed to Texas Red
But the outlaw didn't worry men that tried before were dead
Twenty men had tried to take twenty men had made a slip
Twenty one would be the ranger with the big iron on his hip
Big iron on his hip*

*The morning passed so quickly it was time for them to meet
It was twenty past eleven when they walked out in the street
Folks were watching from their windows every-body held their breath
They knew this handsome ranger was about to meet his death
About to meet his death*

*There was forty feet between them when they stopped to make their Play
And the swiftness of the ranger is still talked about to-day
Texas Red had not cleared leather when a bullet fairly ripped*

*And the rangers aim was deadly with the big iron on his hip
Big iron on his hip*

*It was over in a moment and the folks had gathered round
There before them lay the body of the outlaw on the ground
Oh he might have gone on living but he made one fatal slip
When he tried to match the ranger with the big iron on his hip
Big iron on his hip*

*Big iron, Big iron
When he tried to match the ranger with the big iron on his hip*

On December 1, Marty was to give his last interview. He told Nashville DJ Al Resin about the Nashville Christmas Parade that he planned to participate in. He was going to ride the Grand Ole Opry float, and was looking forward to winning first place. He jokingly told the DJ to "get around to playing that song of mine somebody requested." Twelve hours later, Marty suffered his final heart attack. Tests at the hospital revealed four blocked arteries. Doctors rushed to save his life, one doctor never leaving his side. Following an eight hour quadruple bypass surgery, Marty's survival chances were upgraded from 5% to 50%. However, on December 8, 1982, Marty Robbins passed away and the whole world cried. And that Arizona Ranger? There's an Agua Fria in Arizona, too, the Agua Fria he sang about.

That was while Randy and I were still in the Army. We got out and were married the following year. I dearly loved *El Paso* and *El Paso City*. Heck I loved all of his songs. The one he wrote for his wife was titled, *My Woman, My Woman, My Wife*, was a moving tribute to his wife, Marizona, and earned Marty his second Grammy award. Marty's second heart attack occurred in 1981. Marty was later to comment, *The truth is I've experienced death so many times I should be dead. I've had race car wrecks at 100 mph and during that operation after my first heart attack in 1969, I technically died on the operating table. Sometimes I wonder why God has let me go on living. But I'm glad He did.*

So here we were tucked away and we hadn't seen those vaqueros. The date was May 15, 2021. We were overdue at home but didn't find out about the phones until the next week.

"Mary, it's June, sorry we didn't call, but we had a bit of trouble and just found out there was a phone available. Is Jim there?"

"Oh, Mom, Ray, Don and Jim left a week ago, trying to track you down."

The Odyssey – Chapter 3

"We're at a resort north of Big Bend called Terlingua Ranch Lodge and the number is (432) 371-2416. When they call home, tell them where we are and ask them to come here, pronto."

"Can't you just come home?"

"We're hiding out, Mary. We picked up a tail out of Brownsville and lost them in Big Bend National Park. Eventually they're going to realize we aren't there and start combing the surrounding area. Is John there?"

"Do you want to talk to him?"

"Yes, please."

"Mom, Mary said you just called, what's up?"

"Trouble and it may have a capital T. Who is available to make a trip down here to the Big Bend area?"

"Myself, Jeb, Abel and John, what do you need?"

"Firepower. Get a 6 horse trailer, fit it with 2 of those saddle tanks of biodiesel and bring 4 good horses. Out of the Armory, get those 2 M2HBs and 4 M240s and a large load of ammo. Dan says to bring M1As or M16/M203s and plenty of extra grenades."

"The other three took M1As, M1911s, M16/M203s, and 400 gallons of diesel. It's going to take a day or two to get this stuff around. What's the best way to get there?"

"Take US 83 and cut across to Alpine, Texas and come south on route 118. There is a County road going east about 58 miles south of Alpine. Take that and follow the signs to Terlingua Ranch, it's about 18 miles. Mary has the phone number. Bring another 24 cases of bourbon; we worked out a deal with these people to exchange bourbon for lodging."

"It's going to take the better part of a week, even driving straight through. Did you want 40mm grenades or M67 grenades?"

"Both, and don't hold back, bring plenty."

"Just what kind of trouble are you in?"

"We're not sure, but it involves 4 Hispanics and the fact that we've been followed all the way from Brownsville. Dan's boys are Deputy Sheriff's, bring them and six horses. They may help cut through any problems we have with local law enforcement. They can ar-

range for the Sheriff to provide some security for the farm, we're willing to pay Reserve Deputies, if necessary. Now, before I go, how are things at home?"

"Crops and gardens are in and we have lots of help from Lakin."

"Any questions, John?"

"I got it all down. I'll call if we run into problems. You take care."

"Wait until you see the new fast draw rigs we got in Laredo. We also picked up 8 extra handguns with long barrels."

o

"I've got some good news, people."

"What?"

"The cavalry is on the way."

"Who?"

"Ray, Don and Jim are already in Texas. John, Jeb, Abel, John, Dan and Jeremy are leaving within a day or so. They're bringing our heavy armament."

"As in...?"

"They're bringing heavy and medium machineguns, ammo, M16/M203s, 40mm and M67 grenades."

"How long?"

"It's about 650 miles; my best guess is 36 hours tops."

"Let's go riding tomorrow," Dan suggested.

"A pleasure ride?"

"Not really. I'd like to ride back to where this County road left the highway and see if those fellas are blocking our only exit from this ranch."

"That's going to be a very long ride, Dan; 18 miles one way," Gunny pointed out.

"What about the horses' hooves?"

"They have a farrier. I asked him to check them over 2 days ago. They were overdue,

but he said he could have them done in 2 days, max."

"What did you work out with the Lodge about paying for the accommodations with the bourbon?"

"I sold them 14 cases at \$240 a case against our bills. I asked June to have the boys bring more bourbon, it only cover a week for 4 rooms."

"Getting back to the ride, Dan; how many of us do you think should go?"

"How about you and me Gunny?"

"The Cisco Kid and Pancho?"

"Unless you want to be Tonto."

o

"Mom called, Dan. They're at a ranch in the Big Bend County and have trouble."

"Didn't Ray and the others just leave looking for them?"

"Last week. Look, I need tomorrow to get everything we need around. We're going to need a 6 horse trailer and a truckload of weapons. Mom gave me a list of what to bring."

"How far away are they?"

"She said 650 miles; I think we might be able to drive straight through."

"Why not take 2 4-horse trailers, we already have those?"

"Sure, that will save some time. We need those 200 gallon fuel tanks and stuff from the armory. I have a list."

"Did she say to bring Dragon Skin?"

"Didn't mention it."

"I'll be there in 5 minutes and we start getting this organized."

Long story short, we made a quick run to Garden City and had toppers put on Dan and my pickups. We picked up 2 more of those saddle tanks and headed home. We got our wives to drop everything and put together some food. We divided the guns ½ in each pickup and loaded enough ammo to fight a war. I talked to Jason and filled him in and arranged for Jeb, Abel and John to come along. We decided to take 8 Morgan's with their tack. We were ready to leave 12 hours after Mom called.

"You be careful, John."

"Mary, it's probably nothing. But we're about as ready as we could be. If your Mom calls back, tell her when we left and that we should be there in 15 hours or less. When you hear from Jim, tell him where they are and to beat feet to their location. We have extra supplies they might not have taken."

"What going on down there?"

"I have no idea, it sort of sounds like the Texas Revolution, in reverse. What is it about your Mom? She attracts trouble like flypaper attracts flies."

"Just lucky?"

"What's with all the booze?"

"They apparently sold it to the Lodge where they're staying."

o

It was beginning to get hot out. The desk clerk said the expected high today was 85°. Dan and Gunny left about 6am, riding their horses and trailing Marilyn's and mine. I decided to call Mary and find out if they left yet.

"Mary, this is Mom, what's going on at home?"

"They left about sundown last night. John said to tell you about 15 hours. Jim called this morning and I told him where you were and he's headed your way. They were in Houston, so it may take them a while. They're bringing 2 trailers and 8 Morgan geldings, plus the things you told me you wanted. You didn't mention the Dragon Skin, but they brought it for you, just in case. What did you do to attract attention now?"

"You tell me and we'll both know, Mary; it could be the out-of-state plates."

"What do you think, they want to waylay you and steal the horses?"

"I don't know honey; we could just look vulnerable because of our age."

"Can't you contact the Sheriff?"

"This is Brewster County. We're a long way from the Sheriff's Department. The desk clerk said that prior to 1959 the County seat, Alpine, was the largest city in the largest county in the largest state of the Union."

"What's it like down there?"

"The ranch is in a valley that's surrounded by mountain ranges. We're probably only a short ride to the Park boundary. Dan and Gunny went riding today to see if that bunch of guys is camped out waiting for us. If not, we might just make a break for it and head home."

"And if you can't?"

"Good question, Mary."

o

Gunny and I didn't really push hard; it was warm and getting hot. We stopped every hour to give the horses a 5 minute break and change mounts. We'd picked up 2 4-quart desert canteens each at the ranch's store and gave the horses a drink from a collapsible pail. Only movie cowboys give their horses drinks from their hats. It's a very good way to ruin a \$200 hat. I suppose we looked the part of a couple of old ranchers out for a morning ride. By now, the new boots we'd gotten in San Antonio were well broken in and our jeans were about half faded. But let me ask you, in modern day Texas, how many ranchers do you know that wear 2-gun rigs? That many, huh? I still have 10 fingers left on my portable calculator.

Gunny was chewing on a big fat Cuban cigar and I had a Panatela. We weren't pushing the horses because of the heat. 36 hours meant the John should be here by tonight. I had no idea where Jim and there others were, if they were someplace like Houston, they were as far away as home was from here. If they pushed, it was at least a 13 hour drive, maybe more. We made it almost all the way up to Highway 118 when we spotted the pickup truck.

"See it?"

"Yeah, we'll rest the horses over there and check them out."

"How many?"

"Wait a minute; I'll get my binos out of the saddle bag."

"Have a look; I make it to be 6 men."

"We picked up 2 more?"

"You tell me."

"You missed 2 guys behind that pickup, there are 8 of them."

"Too many to take on, huh?"

"With cowboy guns? If we'd have brought the M1As, maybe, but there are too many of them. Let's head back and wait for the kids to show up."

Our ride back to the Lodge was quicker than our trip to the highway, having mounts to switch to helped and the horses could stand the brief gallops. We ran them a mile and then switched, putting a little distance between us and the growing group of, well, whatever they were. With the summer heat, the Lodge was beginning to empty out and most of the guests were Texans.

The store at the ranch sold all kinds of western type clothing including those yellow rain slickers and those heavy coats, the dusters. We bought cans of ScotchGard rain proofing and had done our hats inside and out, but I still wasn't going to use a \$200 hat as a pail. Don't tell anyone I did my hat, either, it's not politically correct, the hat has an X code (brush only).

"Well there's another nice mess you've gotten me into."

"Yes, Gunny, it is."

"Abbott and Costello?"

"Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello did *Who's on First*."

"If you two are done clowning around, would you mind telling us what is going on?"

"There is one pickup up at the highway with 8 guys."

"Wet-back's?"

"I couldn't really tell, they were facing us."

"You're going to be sleeping on the couch if you keep that up."

"Yes, they were the same 4 plus 4 more."

"So, why are they following us?"

"That's the \$64 question. We might have tried to take them on, but we didn't take our Main Battle Rifles."

The knock at the door was the first step in the solution to our problem; it was Ray, Don and Jim.

"Come in, are we glad to see you."

"I can imagine," Jim replied. "We saw 2 pickups and about a dozen men at the junction of 118 and Terlingua Ranch Road."

"There were only 8 of them around noon," Dan explained. "Gunny and I rode down there and checked them out."

"Have the others gotten here yet?"

"They're coming in 2 pickups and bringing 8 horses plus all of our heavy and medium machine guns."

"We brought 400 gallons of diesel if you need to top off. So what's the deal, why are these guys following you?"

"We have no idea Jim. They've been on our tail since we left Brownsville."

"Did you ask them?"

"Considering their behavior, we didn't have to. If we saw a good fishing spot and stopped suddenly, they'd sometimes catch up to us. When that happened, they would drive on a short way and camp. We didn't need to ask them anything, they were up to no good."

"If you had, you may have had them outnumbered. I understand there were only 2 of them in the beginning."

"We thought we lost them completely, Jim. We'd didn't stop in the Park because we saw this place on the map the ranger gave us."

"So we're going to have 17 up against 12?"

"If they increased from 8 to 12 between noon and when you came through, there may be more," Gunny suggested.

"Mary said they left around dark, so they should be here."

The knock at the door settled that. The 6 young men from the farms had arrived. We were still renting the campground spaces, so the newcomers could sleep in the two tents. Between the 2 tent trailers and the slick camper Jim had on his pickup, we had accommodations for 11.

o

"Hey Gunny, how about we feed these guys and just split the bill 4 ways?"

"It works for me Dan. It's a good thing we didn't take down our trailers. We'd better get

those horses bedded and then we can eat."

If the kids were physically exhausted, it was exceeded only by our mental exhaustion. Sitting there on the ranch for the better part of week waiting for the shoe to drop 700 miles from home wasn't our cup of tea. On our home turf, we had the advantage while down in west Texas, the group of guys had the home court advantage. I wanted to sit down with June after supper and get her feelings on the matter and suggested to Gunny, Tom and Hank that they do the same thing. Tomorrow, when everyone had a good night's sleep, we'd develop a plan.

o

"Dad, there's a right way and a wrong way to handle this thing. I called the Brewster County Sheriff's office this morning and filled them in. They said they'd check it out and let us know."

"That's fine with me Dan; at this point I'd do anything to avoid a confrontation."

"We have the Park Service map, but that's not much of a help if we end up in a fight," Gunny pointed out.

"We haven't seen much TV since we left home, what's going on in the Country and the world in general?"

"They had a special on TV, *Nation of Aztlán – Act of War?* that was fairly interesting. The Nation of Aztlán (NOA), first organized in the early 1990s, is a California-based Hispanic nationalist organization that claims to represent the desires and aspirations of the Hispanic community. The organization calls for the United States to return *Aztlán Territory* - Aztlán being the mythic homeland of the Mexican people, or Aztecs, which according to legend is found in the American Southwest or Northern México. The group's nationalist message is blurred by frequent appeals, anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, homophobia and other expressions of hatred.

"According to legend, Aztlán was the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs which they left in journeying southward to found Tenochtitlan, the center of their new civilization, which is today's México City. Today, the *Nation of Aztlán* (NOA) refers to the American southwestern states of California, Arizona, Texas, New México, portions of Nevada, Utah, Colorado, which Chicano nationalists claim were stolen by the United States and must be reconquered (Reconquista) and reclaimed for México. The myth of Aztlán was revived by Chicano political activists in the 1960s as a central symbol of Chicano nationalist ideology. In 1969, at the Chicano National Liberation Youth Conference in Denver, Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales put forth a political document entitled *El Plan de Aztlán* (Spiritual Plan of Aztlán). The Plan is a clarion call to Mexican-Americans to form a separate Chicano nation:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage, but

also of the brutal "gringo" invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers ...declare that the call of our blood is...our inevitable destiny.... Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops, and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent.... Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come.... With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, and we are Aztlán.

The NOA is sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, often likening the Palestinians' goals with their own: La Raza's struggle for the land and for political and economic self-determination is not different from the struggle of the Palestinian people in Zionist Israel. We live in Aztlán under Anglo domination as the Palestinians live under Jewish domination. La Raza, meaning the nation or the race, is a term used by some mainstream Hispanic organizations like the National Council of La Raza, which the NOA is not affiliated with and does not represent.

"That sounds interesting, what's going on with China and Russia?"

"Russia agreed to supply the new Chinese government all of the oil and gas they need to rebuild and expand their economy. The Chinese, in turn, agreed to supply Russia with the latest electronics. They have some kind of a new fighter, similar to the F-22 Raptor. It's supposed to be Mach 2.5 and totally stealthy. Mikoyan & Gurevich (MiG) have resumed testing on the MiG-35, their F-22, and Sukhoi is building their equivalent of the Joint Strike Fighter."

"We not at war with Russia and the Nationalist Chinese have always been our friends," Tom pointed out.

"We haven't been much of a trading partner with the Chinese since the war and we didn't back them when the PRC overran them. According to Global Security, the Mexican government ordered several of those MiGs and even more of the Sukhoi fighters."

"American pilots have always been as good as or better than Russian pilots."

"That's only because their pilots were under the command of Ground Control."

*Ground Control to Major Tom
Commencing countdown,
engines on
Check ignition
and may God's love be with you*

"They aren't doing it that way anymore. The Russians have their own *Top Gun* now."

"But they'd never attack the US."

"Maybe not, but they're going to be training the Mexican Air Force."

"What are you suggesting and what does that have to do with our being followed?"

"I think..."

Jim was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was a Deputy Sheriff from Brewster County. He told Dan Jr. that he hadn't seen any sign of a group of Hispanics at the junction of 118 and Terlingua Ranch Road. He'd even gone all the way down to the west Park entrance. He wanted to know what we had seen and why we thought we had a problem. There was a lot badge flashing going on as we identified ourselves and explained everyone's status as either a Deputy Sheriff or Reserve Deputy for Kearny County. The Deputy suggested that we avoid concealed carry, the same as we'd been told in San Antonio. He said the Sheriff might extend a little professional courtesy, to Dan and Jeremy, but not to push it.

"It doesn't sound to me like the Sheriff is going to be a lot of help," Gunny said.

"If they're gone, how about we pack up and get the hell out of here?" June suggested.

"Dan, Jeremy, wait about an hour and check the junction again. If it's clear, we'll pack up and leave. We'll communicate on channel 2021 on the SINCGARS."

o

"Dad, they're back."

"Chit," Gunny remarked.

"Same number?"

"I make it 18."

"They can't just be after us."

"The lodge was nearly empty; who else would they be interested in?"

"There are those old silver mines."

The Odyssey – Chapter 4

You didn't often hear me using the term wet-back. It's a derogatory name for anyone of Hispanic descent and implies that all the Hispanics in the US are illegal immigrants. They aren't and no matter how frustrated one might be about the illegal immigration problem, name calling won't solve anything, be it human nature or not. The only time it was used in this story was above and when an attempt was made at a lame joke in chapter 3.

Odyssey:

- 1a. A long and adventurous journey or series of wanderings;
- 1b. A story that relates such a journey.
2. A long and drawn-out process of change or development.

"They were quicksilver mines. They extracted mercury and besides, they're closed."

If it was the Nation of Aztlán starting to reclaim their Country, we picked one hell of a time to take a vacation. We could have stayed in Kansas and fought with the occasional gang of thugs that showed up there. Another thing, of all of the relocated people and vacationers in Texas this year, why us? We didn't have a sign on the side of the horse trailers saying, *Get us*.

If the US made a preemptive strike against México, would either the Chinese or Russians join in the fray? The US had sat by passively in the face of the problem of illegal immigration during the early years of the 21st century. México had passed drug reforms legalizing possession of everything. Most ordinary Mexican citizens could barely afford food, the new law wasn't for them, it was to attract tourists. It more or less backfired because of the H5N1 pandemic and the war. Then, when Yellowstone blew, they closed their borders.

México hadn't been successful at that either. With the shoe on the other foot, it appeared that México had almost openly support the NOA. Now with this military buildup the kids described, almost anything could happen. This gave us renewed emphasis to get the hell out of Texas and home to Kansas; Kansas, after all, wasn't one of the states they wanted to reconquest. The problem, or so it appeared, was getting out of Texas. Texas had, as of 1996, over 1 million horses, reported. And not all breeds had responded to the survey, so the population was probably higher. Therefore, we weren't sure they were after our horses. Terlingua Ranch had a fair sized herd of their own; they offered trail rides down to the Bid Bend National Park.

"What are we going to do?" Rachel asked.

"Rachel, we have 17 people and 19 horses. We could probably rent some pack animals from the ranch and try and get lost in the Park." Hank suggested.

I could see that Rachel was about to go off, so I got into my Paramedic bag and came up with a Xanax. Rachel had been off them a while now and it hit her like a ton of bricks. The boys had brought the Combat Lifesavers bags and I made sure they were kept up to date so we had some medical supplies if we got into a conflict. A quick inventory showed we had a total of 26 of those plus the stuff I brought in addition to 8 of the bags. Our food supply was beginning to run short, we'd only planned on a 4-month trip. However, eating out some nights had extended it and I guessed we had maybe 3 weeks' worth for 17 people. We could hit the store here at the ranch for some supplies, but it didn't really carry all that much.

"How much food did you boys bring?"

"We have about a one-month supply for the 3 of us," Jim answered.

"We don't have over 2 weeks for the 6 of us, June; the whiskey took up a lot of space."

"Marilyn and Elle, let's get to the store. Bring your BOBs, we may need some of our gold coins."

"Hey, kiddo, I'll just bring the coins, why carry the whole bag?"

"We'll talk to the front desk about renting some pack horses," Dan said.

We had only been at the Lodge about 2 weeks; the 24 cases of bourbon gave us a credit we could use to rent the horses, provided we gave up our rooms and only kept the spaces at the campground. We could always dig out our gold coins, every BOB had 4 and we had 17 BOBs, ergo \$85,000 in emergency gold coins. Along the way, we'd stopped in banks and exchanged the one ounce gold coins we brought for gold certificates and used the paper money. You don't suppose those people figured out how much gold we had, do you? We had bought 18 ounces each because we weren't sure how much things would cost. That was in addition to the 4 gold coins in each of our BOBs.

o

Back in the camping area, we started to watch the communal TV to get caught up on the state of things in the Country and the world. The Hispanic population of the US had been growing by 58% a year. While the percentage of the US population was only 15% Hispanic in the year 2000, the growth rate of the Hispanics had greatly changed that and the census of 2020 hadn't been published yet. According to the 2010 census, the Hispanics that had allowed themselves to be counted numbered nearly 33% of the US population. In states like California, 'whites' had been a minority for years. I'm only giving you the information for perspective, not to denigrate Hispanics. Texas was more than 50% Hispanic in the 2020 census, up from 32% in the 2000 census.

The first flight of 20 Mig-35s arrived in México today, accompanied by 36 SU-39s and

several II-78 Midas aerial refueling tankers. The planes were tracked by NORAD and a flight of F-22 Raptors sent aloft to confirm the flight was headed to México, indicated to ground controllers that the planes were armed. It is not known if the government of México also purchased the tanker aircraft.

At the Mexican port of Manzanillo, an upswing in Cargo ships from mainland China and Russia has been noticed over the past few months, fueling suggestions that México is seriously upgrading its military forces. In recent years, the Mexican Army has replaced its G-3 rifles with the FX-05 Xicóatl. Equipped as they are, the Mexican military may be a force to be reckoned with however, there is every indication that their training is lacking. México's Army has grown from the long-term force of 300,000 to nearly 1,000,000 over the past 4 years since the eruption of Yellowstone.

"If they have a million soldiers with guns, they're going to have another revolution."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that Gunny; they could have something else in mind. Their Army is nearly as big as that of the US."

"Oh, oh."

"What?"

"Our Army is barely 600,000 active duty soldiers and our total military active duty for all four branches of service is only about 1.4 million."

"How many Marines?"

"Less than 180,000."

"Does anyone know what they brought in on those ships?"

"The guy on TV didn't say."

"Those M1A3 Abrams have a bit heavier armor and a new engine but they aren't that much better than the T95s that the Chinese are building."

"What are the Russians building these days?"

"Hard to say, they had their own T-95 project but it never got beyond the testing stage due to financial considerations. The primary armament is reportedly a 152mm smooth-bore gun / ATGM launcher with an ammunition load of at least 40 rounds. If they put that 1,200 HP diesel from the T-80UD in those, they'd really be something to contend with."

"If they got the Chinese to perfect that tank, we'd be about even-even as far as tanks go."

o

The A3 version of the Abrams tank had an add-on package that better suited it to the urban environment and included stand-off armor to protect against RPG attacks. It also included upgrades to bring all tanks up to the M1A2SEP standard. You can read about it at Global Security. It seemed apparent that the Abrams might be the last main battle tank fielded by the US Army. The real problem with the Abrams, besides the engine, was that it was a cold war design with the greatest armor protection forward. The A3 package was intended to address that problem and they had first been fielded in Iraq in 2006.

As The Armor Site notes in its outstanding M1 Abrams profile, PROSE Phase 1 aims to overhaul existing AGT 1500 engine components, in order to reengineer the production process and improve field support. TIGER is a big part of that effort.

As part of PROSE Phase 2, Honeywell International Engines and Systems and General Electric would finalize development of a new LV50-2 gas turbine engine. The goals as noted by GE are an engine that offers replacement with no to very few structural modifications, reduces the parts Count by 43%, improves Reliability by Over 400%; and addresses the M1's current poor fuel mileage even for a tank by offering a 50% reduction fuel at idle, increasing Operating Range by up to 70 Miles with current fuel tanks, and still offering 1,500 hp to drive the M1 Abrams along at its accustomed lightning-fast clip (speeds over 60 miles (100km) per hour have been reported). On-board electronic diagnostics and health monitoring and an on-board electronic log book, or data memory module, will also help reduce maintenance requirements; the goal is a reduction of nearly two-thirds (over 65%) in operations and support costs. These measures, plus ongoing electronics upgrades, are expected to sustain the US Army's fleet of almost 7,000 Abrams tanks into 2027.

I'm sure you remember that LV100 engine; it was developed for the Crusader and often mentioned as a replacement for the AGT engine. It evolved into the LV50-2. It finally happened, after the tanks came back from Iraq and before the war. The other upgrade replaced the M256 gun with the M256A1, the Rheinmetall L/55. They were still working on it when the war came, but they were ahead on the engine contract and when they could, resumed the conversion of the M1A2s to M1A3s.

o

Do you get confused about the various Méxican civilizations? Between 1800 and 300 BC, complex cultures began to form. Some matured into advanced Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilizations such as the: Olmec, Teotihuacan, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec, Huastec, Purepecha, Toltec and Méxica (aka "Aztecs"), which flourished for nearly 4,000 years before first contact with Europeans.

These indigenous civilizations are credited with many inventions in: building pyramid-

temples, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, writing, highly-accurate calendars, fine arts, intensive agriculture, engineering, an abacus calculation, a complex theology, and the wheel. Without any draft animals the wheel was used only as a toy. The only metals they apparently knew how to use were native copper and gold.

Archaic inscriptions on rocks and rock walls all over northern México (especially in the state of Nuevo León) demonstrate an early propensity for counting in México. The counting system was one of the most complex in the world being based on a base 20 number system. These very early and ancient count-markings were associated with astronomical events and underscore the influence that astronomical activities had upon Mexican natives, even before they possessed European civilization. In fact, many of the later Mexican based civilizations would all carefully build their cities and ceremonial centers according to specific astronomical events.

At different points in time, three different Mexican cities were the largest cities in the world: Teotihuacan, Tenochtitlan, and Cholula. These cities, among several others, blossomed as centers of commerce, ideas, ceremonies, and theology. In turn, they radiated influence outwards onto nearby neighboring cultures in central México.

While many city-states, kingdoms, and empires competed with one another for power and prestige, México can be said to have had five major civilizations: The Olmec, Teotihuacan, the Toltec, the Mexica and the Maya. These civilizations (with the exception of the politically-fragmented Maya) extended their reach across México – and beyond – like no others. They consolidated power and distributed influence in matters of trade, art, politics, technology, and theology. Other regional power players made economic and political alliances with these four civilizations over the span of 4,000 years. Many made war with them. But almost all found themselves within these five spheres of influence.

The Spanish conquest of México was one of the most important campaigns in the Spanish colonization of the Americas. This campaign was initiated by conquistador, Hernán Cortés, who invaded México in 1519 and conquered the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in 1521. It took almost 70 years for the Spaniards to conquer the rest of Mesoamerica and the conquest of the Yucatan took almost 170 years.

It is important to distinguish between the Spanish conquest of México and the Spanish conquest of Yucatán. Although the Yucatán Peninsula is part of the modern-day Country of México, the Spanish conquest of México refers to the conquest of the Mexica/Aztec empire by Hernán Cortés from 1519-1521. The Spanish conquest of Yucatán, on the other hand, refers to the conquest of the Maya empire from 1511-1697. Montezuma was an Aztec.

o

The number of 'vaqueros' had been increasing almost geometrically and we still had no idea what they wanted.

"I say we go ask them what they want," Dan Jr. suggested.

"Son, they have us outnumbered."

"Dad we have the big guns. We could take a couple of the M240s as back up and half a dozen of us go ask. Why do you assume that what they want is something bad for us?"

"Just being careful I guess, plus 30 years in the Army where the guys on the other side were rarely friendly."

"Besides Dan, there has been considerable talk on the news about this Nation of Aztlán," Gunny added.

"I don't dispute that these Chicanos might try to rejoin parts of the US with México, Gunny. But if you remember your history, many of the defenders at the Alamo were Tejanos. They were Texians first and their ethnicity wasn't an issue. How do we know that these fellas aren't Tejanos?"

"I guess we don't, Dan. But, how would they know what we had in terms of equipment and so forth?"

"You must have freely spent money, if you were willing to shell out the big bucks for leather and guns in Laredo. You have top of the line tent trailers and can afford the fuel to bring your horses with you. If they've watched you all the way from Brownsville, they must know that."

"So, you're just going to walk up to them and ask their intentions?"

"Do you know any better way?"

"I can't think of one."

"We'll be back."

"All nine of you had better go, that way you can take a Ma Deuce."

"Oh all right, if you insist. I guess its 50-50 at this point isn't it?"

"Display those Deputy badges that might help cut some ice."

"We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto; our badges may not cut much ice." (The actual line was: Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.)

"Hopefully, they'll identify you as the good guys."

o

About an hour later our nine people returned, followed by 3 pickups of Hispanics. It took a while to sort it out, but my son had been right, they were Tejanos and totally opposed to the NOA. They had first spotted us near Corpus Christi and had followed us since. Their assumption was we were some rich Kansas farmers. Dan had been right on the money, we had been advertising the fact, in a way. We were hauling around \$40,000 in horse flesh just for the occasional ride and they'd confirmed their suspicions when they saw what we'd spent in Laredo.

Most of them, but not all, worked as ranch hands at one time or another. Some had either a revolver or rifle, but they were poorly equipped to resist these illegals' who were now openly calling for Reconquista. They watched the news the same as everyone else and with México building its armed forces were concerned that they had little time left to prepare for a war with México.

Manny and Juan were spokesmen for the group, which now numbered over 30. They had contacts in Alpine that kept in touch with them and they simply disappeared when the Deputy showed up. It depended on which Deputy came and they decided not to run the risk.

"So, what do you want from us?"

"Mister Robbins, we need all the help we can get. We've been debating how to approach you and ask for your help."

"Fine, but you still haven't said what you need."

"Guns, horses and food for starters," Juan replied.

"How many people do you have?"

"Just the 36 you see."

"Dan, take this fellas to the café and get them fed, we'll talk it over."

"Gracias."

"De nada."

"¿Habla español?"

"No."

o

"What do you think?"

"It's not our fight."

"If México is going to try and reclaim part of the US, it is. I suggest we call Jason and have him load enough riding horses to give everyone a mount and a remount. We could use some of the draft animals to pull wagons, and they can empty out the armory plus bring enough food for a 6 months campaign."

"Are you sure you want to get involved?" June asked.

"Honey, I'm not sure about anything. We're a little long in the tooth for this, war is for young men. If México starts reclaiming territory, where will they stop? I'm not so sure that our part of Kansas wasn't part of old México at one time. If that's true, it's a question of when we fight them, not if."

"This is going to be strange, how do we tell the good guys from the bad guys?"

"I think we'll just have to depend on the Tejanos."

"Ok, call Jason. Have him bring E85, horse drawn wagons, the chuck wagon with food, camping equipment and the list of supplies that June wants. I thought our fighting days were over, but we can have a go at it.

o

"Juan, where do we set up?"

"You're going to join us?"

"Yes and rather than spending money on things we already have, we called home and they're bring down horses, weapons and everything we'll need. Now once we get it all together, where would you suggest we locate?"

"Do you know Rio Grande Village?"

"No but we have a map."

"Both of the visitor centers are closed during the summer because of the heat. This is near the end of the road to the river in the eastern portion of the park. If they use a bridge cross the river, they have to do it At El Paso, Falcon Dam, Roma, Rio Grande City, Los Ebanos, Hildago, McAllen (Pharr), Progresso, Los Indios, Unknown, Laredo or Brownsville. We think they may try to construct a pontoon bridge at Rio Grande Village."

"We don't have mortars, Juan."

"Tom?"

"I don't have many contacts left, but I could try to get a couple of M244, 60mm mortars. I can probably get HE cartridges, either the M720 or the M888."

"Smoke and illumination would be nice if you can get them."

"Ok, I'll try to call a friend at Ft. Bliss."

"You were right Tom; I should have gotten the mortars."

o

It took a week to get the livestock and all that it entailed down from Kansas. Jason had to hire tractor trailer rigs to move everything and brought a tanker with 1,000-gallons of E85. We had moved from the ranch because they asked us to leave if we were planning on moving a part of our farm down here. We moved to a place called The Ten Bits Ranch. They only had 4 rooms and no camping facilities. What they did have was plenty of space. They generated their own electricity and couldn't provide us with power. However, off-season started on June 1st and as long as the only thing we wanted was water, we could strike a deal. \$625 a week, in advance and that would give us a spot and access to water.

A couple of days later, a Hummer showed up from Ft. Bliss driven by an E-9. He was pulling a trailer and he brought 4 M244 mortars and a trailer load of shells. The price was 4 ounces of gold. The standard Conestoga wagon was approximately 26 feet long, 12 feet high and weighed more than one and one half tons. Usually four skilled wagon makers could build one in about two months' time. They were built similar to the wagons used in Germany but on a much larger scale. The German farm wagon was low, with smaller wheels. Here in America the wagons had to be larger in order to get through the deep rutted roadbeds and over tree stumps that had not been removed from the roadbeds.

The bed of the wagon was curved or boat-shaped, the center sagging similar to a canoe. This was to prevent the shifting of the freight in the wagons when they were pulled along the side of a hill or mountain when the road bed had not been cut level. The bed was about 16 feet long, (several were known to be 24 feet long, 4 feet wide and 4 feet deep, made of oak about an inch thick. There were end gates, front and back, to make loading and unloading easier. They were on heavy hand-made iron hinges and held shut with strong chains. The top had up to 16 bows over which was spread white canvas or heavy homemade spun cloth. The front and rear bows were set at angles, leaning out over the ends of the wagon. Each end of the canvas was puckered to close the ends that helped to prevent rain and snow from entering the wagon bed and also to provide protection to the driver in bad weather. The sides of the canvas were laced to the wagon by ropes.

We converted our horse drawn wagons to something resembling Conestoga wagons by adding the bows and the canvas tops. Our wagons had balloon tires and were much better suited to traveling on finished and unfinished roads. Jason even brought one of the bus wagons we built, but I sent it back home, everyone with us on this new adventure would be sitting a horse or riding in a wagon. What I had in mind was June, Marilyn, Rachel and Elle driving the 3 supply wagons and our chuck wagon. June and I had a word or two about that and as long as we weren't sticking them in the wagons out of chauvinism, June suggested that one of the boys ride with them in case there was a problem. I think what she had in mind was Rachel's condition. Our remuda was 175 head, plus the horses we already had. It included 120 saddle horses and 50 head of Clydesdales.

A better setup couldn't be wished for. All we needed was 4 large Army tents for us and our new friends. Jason loaded our pickups and various trailers and hauled them back to Kansas. Just give him a call and he'd bring the semis back down and bring what was left of us home. As it happens some of those Tejanos were married and brought their wives along to cook. We were in good shape there; we had about a ton of pinto beans and the same of rice.

We took advantage of the hospitality of the folks at The Ten Bits Ranch and got all of our weapons sighted in again and people assigned to the various heavy weapons. As was noted in *A Lady for All Seasons*, Custer's biggest problem was his armament. If we were going to be up against people with assault weapons, we'd need something better than bows and arrows, as in heavy, medium and light machineguns and mortars. It would have been nice to have more of the M203s, but we weren't going to call Tom's friend again.

Once we got our act together, we set off to the Park, but not through the regular entrance, the Ranger would have never let us in. We made it to Rio Grande Village about Friday, June 11th. Tom was our logistic man and I'll swear he belly ached the entire way. In addition to the supplies for ourselves, we had hay wagons, grain wagons and even a water wagon. Everything was powered by E85, the generators and even the Coleman stoves. I'll be honest; I don't see how people can live on beans, rice and tortillas. One wagon had a generator and a freezer in it, thank God. There is a limit to this roughing it business. The freezer was stocked mostly with pork.

When we got there, we set up a proper camp and our new cooks set to boiling the beans that had been soaking all day. Yes, of course we brought the beer and the bourbon, camping is very thirsty work. And, Thank You Jesus, Jason had thought to bring 8 more kegs and 2 cases of bourbon. Not that we needed the bourbon, the previous ranch gave us a refund of unused bourbon we given them against our bills.

The Odyssey – Chapter 5

Our tents were military surplus, but I don't know from which war. The General Purpose Large Tent is 18 feet wide by 52 feet long. The walls are 5'8" with a twelve foot ridgeline height. The tent featured four windows on each sidewall and one doorway at each end. The entire sidewall rolled and tied in the up position for flow through ventilation. Standard stovepipe shields are located on the roof to accommodate the standard military heaters 4" pipe. With our small number of people (17+36=53), we used one for our dining hall and recreation tent, one for supplies and the others to sleep in. We had air mattresses so we didn't have to sleep on the ground.

This is Dan and I'll have to admit I didn't write that little piece on positive and negative liberty. An example of positive liberty might be what we were about to do next. The first small battle came in Arizona, two states away. We thought it might come in California; the southern part of the state had never recovered from all that had happened. They could have just walked into that state. The Minutemen Organization had moved to southern Arizona in the intervening years, probably to be closer to where most of the illegals crossed into the US. I can tell you one thing, we didn't get here any too soon.

"Gunny, why don't you see to setting up our defenses? Position everything so we can repulse an assault from either side of the border."

"Who do you want me to defend against, México or the Nation of Aztlán?"

"Yes, we're in a spot to prevent the Mexican Army from crossing the border for all of the Big Bend Country. Do you think the NOA will standstill for that?"

"There are many bridges they can cross from El Paso to the Gulf and they have 3 states where they can come into the US, New México, Arizona and California."

"Señor Robbins, before 1850, all of that land was part of the US. The México Cession is a historical name for the region of the present day southwestern US that was ceded to the US by México in 1848 under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo following the Mexican-American War. The cession of this territory from México was a condition for the end of the war. After the end of the War, border disputes between the United States and México remained unsettled. Land that now comprises lower Arizona and New México was part of a proposed southern route for a transcontinental railroad. US President Franklin Pierce was convinced by Jefferson Davis, then the Country's Secretary of War, to send James Gadsden to negotiate the Gadsden Purchase with México. Under the resulting agreement, the US paid México \$10 million dollars to secure the land," Manny explained.

"As originally envisioned, the purchase would have encompassed a much larger region, extending far enough south to include most of the current Mexican states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas as well as the entire Baja California peninsula. These original boundaries were opposed not only by the Mexican people, but

also by anti-slavery US Senators who saw the purchase as tantamount to the acquisition of more slave territory. Even the small strip of land that was ultimately acquired was enough to anger the Méxican people, who saw Santa Anna's actions as yet another betrayal of their Country and watched in dismay as he squandered the funds generated by the Purchase. The Gadsden Purchase helped to end Santa Anna's political career," Juan continued.

"What do you fellas think about the illegal immigrants?"

"Our families have lived in Texas since before the Texas Revolution," Juan said. "We might be the wrong people to ask. The United States allows more legal immigrants than any other Country. In the first place, México is exporting people because they can't care for them. In the second place, more recently, a significant number of the illegals have military training. Some even bring weapons with them. There is a bit of a glut of the G-3 rifles."

"Would you like to have those instead of the M16s?"

"Of, course, but we don't have the money."

"What do they run?"

"\$500. More for the magazines and the ammo."

"Would \$25,000 in gold get everything you need?"

"Si, it would get the rifles and magazines, but only a limited supply of ammo."

"Tom, where can I get 100,000 rounds of 7.62x51mm on short notice?"

"I don't really know; I'll have to make some calls."

"You find it and I'll have Jason pick up and deliver it. We each need to come up with 6 ounces of gold to buy our new hands the G-3 rifles."

"I don't know about you, but I could use some more money. Have Jason talk to Sandy and she'll give him some to cover me."

"Dan, about all I have left is 2 ounces plus the coins in our BOBs," Tom explained.

"Hank, how much do you need?"

"Either Susan or Sandy can give Jason what we need, say 24 ounces."

"Make those calls Tom and I'll call Jason as soon as the ammo is lined up."

"Dan I made some calls and I have anywhere from 100 to 125 cases available. I can get it delivered and it costs \$200 a case. How much do you want?"

"We'll take all 125 cases. How much is that?"

"20 ounces."

"Let me call Jason. Is there anything else we need?"

"Have him bring more beans, rice and flour and those M40 gas masks."

I had to laugh; it had been a bit aromatic around here lately.

"Jason, Dan. I hate to ask but we need a few things. Talk to Susan and Sandy and bring Hank and Gunny each 24 ounces of gold. I think you'd better bring 48 ounces out of June's and my safe. We need another ton each of beans, rice, flour maybe 120 steaks and all of the gas masks."

"Has the trouble started yet?"

"Not in Texas, but we heard that they were crossing the border in Arizona."

"I'll be there in 24 hours."

"No you won't, I want you to back haul the M16s and most of the ammo. Our new hands want the G-3 rifles. We'll only keep 12 of the M16s, 4 for the ladies and 8 for the Grenadiers."

"What about the M3's for the heavy weapons teams?"

"We'll keep those. Still, you'd better have room to take back the extra weapons and ammo."

"Ok, 36 hours tops."

"Bring someone to back you up."

"I will. See you in 36 hours."

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We were now dependent on commercial radio for news. Because we'd sent all of our vehicles back to Kansas, we were limited to 4 man pack SINCGARS and our Spearheads. The girls and I had bought a few chickens to fill in our freezer and Jason had brought plenty of pork. We ladies were about ready to break camp and head back to one of the open park restaurants for a steak dinner when Dan told me Jason was bring-

ing 120 steaks. He forgot to mention that Jason was bringing more beans and rice.

The problem with marrying old war horses was that they had it in their blood. It was almost like they went looking for trouble this time. When I mentioned it to Dan, I got a long winded speech about Davy Crockett and the Battle of the Alamo. Marilyn told me that Gunny was even more eager for a fight. If we had any advantage at all, it might be the fact that México wasn't quite ready. Buying new equipment is one thing; learning to use it is far different. If you ask me, they made a big mistake when they converted from G-3 rifles to the FX-05 Xicóatl.

Manny and Juan got enough used G-3s to equip their small band, using our gold of course. Their wives got the hand me down weapons, such as they were. The women seemed willing enough to fight and that gave me an idea.

"Why are you going to send the M16s back to Kansas?"

"Our Tejano allies have G-3s."

"They're wives don't. If we get into much of a fight, we're pretty shorthanded. How about equipping the women first and sending anything left over back home?"

"Are the 4 of you going to train them?"

"More like the 3 of us, Rachel is feeling fairly fragile at the moment."

"You'd better get it done; Jason should be here in a matter of hours."

Marilyn and I always liked a challenge. Elle was far gamer than I gave her credit for. If I could get over my misconception about her being the Mistress of the Dark, she could take Rachel's place and then some. We couldn't just abandon Rachel, but I could keep her sedated and out of the way. She was just fine until the fat got in the fire, at which point, she'd basically fall to pieces.

o

One infamous line from the Vietnam War was, "It became necessary to destroy the village to save it." The Bush Administration has carried this thinking to stratospheric heights. Here are some pointed examples.

Destroying Freedom To Save It: The Orwellian absurdity of the USA PATRIOT Act, destroying freedom to save it from evildoers, goes unchallenged in American media and politics. Our government claims the right to infringe on any and all civil liberties; engage in warrant-less wiretaps; peek at our email messages, book purchases and library withdrawals; and enter our homes all without even the minimal oversight from FISA. Spying on citizens is deemed "Homeland Security."

This administration claims the right to imprison people without access to the outside world, family or counsel. Lest Americans think this applies only to foreign bad guys Haliburton's KBR subsidiary is building detention centers across the nation to hold tens of thousands of people. Bill Bennett has just blustered that the US ought roll out the Espionage Act again and prosecute for treason reporters who criticize or expose facts about the Bush administration. Our nation is being pushed beyond normal politics. Conservatives and liberals alike should be concerned. Critics (including these authors) are likely already on watch lists.

Destroying Iraq To Save It: To save Iraqis from a tyrant whom we created, we have destroyed their infrastructure and killed thousands of Iraqis whose lives we, and they, were told would improve. Post-invasion deaths attributable to the war have exceeded those from the ravages of Saddam. Their right to vote is overshadowed by daily miseries, fear, death via sectarian violence or US military air strikes, sickness from devastated water and healthcare systems, and constant frustrations from lack of everyday resources.

One quintessential example of "destroying to save" is Fallujah. The US tried either to round up or kill the able-bodied men in Fallujah by bombing everyone out of the town, and then driving the men back into it so they could be bombed some more. We leveled Fallujah in 2004 and remain intent on rearranging the rubble.

Destroying Our Environment (And Future Economy) To Save It: The administration claims to be saving the environment while keeping our economy strong. But current policies will do neither. The administration refuses to acknowledge the destruction of our environment, and proceeds gleefully with policies that will hasten the process. Using Global Warming as an example, it has not restricted carbon dioxide but put in limited voluntary measures that have done little, not supported the relevant Kyoto Protocols, disputed alarming research or called for further years of study when action was needed, and ousted or gagged scientists with opposing views. Figures released in mid-April place 2004 greenhouse gasses at their highest level ever recorded, with the US being the principle culprit.

Thus we see polar ice caps melting and glaciers receding. Alaskans are now concerned about forest fires. Greenland is no longer covered solidly in ice. Warming oceans are destroying marine ecosystems. Rising sea levels are forcing remote villagers to move to higher ground (if any exists).

Rising sea levels will destroy our climate, coastlines and economy. If remote villagers need to move, so will wealthy seaside resort residents in the U.S. What will our economy look like when our major cities, most along our coasts, are under water? We will see ever increasing post-disaster mass relocations like those following Hurricane Katrina.

We citizens share the blame, though, as these policies are partly driven by our daily decisions. Each of us drives the demand for oil that leads to a degraded ecosystem and a foreign policy that leads to seeking foreign oil control.

Readers willing to look honestly at events will find their own examples of our government destroying things in the name of saving them. If the current administration's philosophy carries into the future, expect the destruction of our social security and Medicare systems – for starters – allegedly to save them of course. Perhaps our only hope is that the Bush administration will continue to stretch destructiveness to such an extent that even its supporters will begin to object.

The Neocon's vision of a "New American Century" has dragged us instead into an Anti-American Century in which our children will pay dearly for our mistakes. Destroying our Country and others is not a form of salvation, but of mass suicide.

◦

I thought you might enjoy that old criticism of the Bush Administration. I didn't agree with those fellas, but sometimes a person had to wonder about Bush when he was President. If nothing else, he accomplished one thing, his brother Jeb didn't stand a chance of being President. There are those that argue that the only reason George surrounded himself with his father's cronies was to keep a lid on UFO secrets the government possessed.

Before the first shots are fired, can anyone tell me which of Nostradamus's quatrains predicted this? They misconstrued one of his quatrains to a prediction of Hitler, but which one covers the current situation? Tell me now, don't wait until it's all over and try to make one of them fit.

◦

We were on the bluff overlooking Rio Grande Village and we took over the Candelilla campground. That put us about 5 miles from Hot Springs, the same to Rio Grande Village and maybe 6 miles from the Boquillas Canyon Overlook. We hadn't really planned on staying in the Big Bend Country when it got hot. The radio reported multiple incidents in Arizona and so far as California went, they could have it as far as we were concerned. If a determined person wanted to cross the border in Arizona or New México, there wasn't a whole lot to stop him/her.

My fellow Americans,

I come to you tonight on a matter of the gravest urgency. Nation of Aztlán forces have captured San Diego and Los Angeles. As a result, all military forces have been placed on DEFCON 2 and all Reserves and National Guard units have been activated.

I have forwarded a measure to Congress declaring that a State of War exists between the United States and México. Our border with México extends some 3,141km. Of that, 2,019 miles of the border are the defined by the Rio Grande River, extending from the Gulf of México to just north of El Paso, Texas. Primary coverage for that portion of the border will be provided by Army unit stationed at the various bridges across the Rio

Grande.

A word of caution about our Hispanic citizens. Not all of the Hispanics in the US are illegal immigrants. US citizens of Mexican and South American ancestry have long been a part of our Country. At one time a significant portion of the Country as it is today was part of México.

We thought these issues to be well settled, but some elements would return those territories to México. It will be difficult to separate those who favor reversion from those opposed. Use your best judgment and when in doubt refer the matter to the proper authorities.

Thank you and good night.

"Did we vote for that guy?"

"Sure, he's a Republican."

"I didn't know he was Hispanic."

"His grandparents immigrated. He was Bush's White House counsel and later Attorney General. Alberto R. Gonzales has a distinguished political career. He's married to Rebecca Turner Gonzales, and they have 3 sons."

"I guess we know who voted for him."

"It doesn't matter, who put him in office; did you hear that DEFCON 2 declaration?"

"I did. We'd better pass out the ACUs with the American flags on the sleeves so our people don't get shot."

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"No firearms are allowed in National Parks."

"You don't say. Hey Jim, there's a fed here giving us a hard time about our guns."

"The law is very clear on this, fellas:

"NATIONAL FORESTS OR WILDERNESS AREAS: Generally, persons who have obtained a valid concealed handgun license may carry their weapon onto National Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management lands unless there is a specific order issued by the local administrator or forest ranger to the contrary. Firearms are prohibited in any National Forest designated a game refuge or wildlife preserve except where authorized by the Forest Service. It is your responsibility to check on restrictions where you plan to visit. Be aware that any Ranger Station or Visitors Center in any National Forest is con-

sidered a Federal Building and it is illegal to carry there.

"NATIONAL PARKS: Possession or use of firearms or other weapons in all National Park Systems areas is prohibited. If you plan to travel to a National Park, you should plan where to store your firearm before entering the National Park or leave your firearm home. If your travels with a firearm require you to enter a National Park, unload your firearm, store the ammunition separately from the firearm, break down the firearm if possible so that it is not readily operable, and lock it away from access while you are driving."

"Does that rule apply to peace officers? I mean, does the Sheriff of Brewster County have to shed his guns to come into the Park?"

"Well, I..."

"You have a problem here Ranger, 2 of us are Deputy Sheriff's and 15 of us are Reserve Deputies for the same Sheriff's Department."

"What Sheriff's Department?"

"Kearny County, Kansas."

"I suppose you're hot on the trail of an anhydrous ammonia thief?"

"Not exactly, no. Our Tejano friends seem to think the Méxicans will try to cross the river here. We aim to stop them."

"Squawk... is Jason, the Ranger won't let me through the gate with the truck."

"Jason, standby, someone will be right up."

"That's what I've been trying to tell you, the Park is closed because of the National Emergency."

"Jim's foster father was killed by the feds at the Kearny County Massacre. You can't imagine how long he's been waiting to get a fed in his sights. What's your choice, Ranger, are you for America or for México?"

"The Park has been known to accept help from volunteers."

"Fine, we're volunteering. We'll make sure nobody brings drugs across this part of the border."

"I'll unlock the Visitor Center and if you need help, you can use the phone inside to call Park Headquarters. What's this about a truck?"

"He's bringing in food and supplies."

"I'll clear him."

Note: Back Country Rangers typically interrupt about 1,000 illegal crossings and confiscate several tons of marijuana every year. For several years, Big Bend's Staff has been short about 50% of the needed positions.

Being they knew we were here, we decided to be good citizens and pay Park admission fees. Because the Park was short of money, we went for Annual National Park Passes at \$50 a head. There were 18 of us including Jason plus 36 Tejanos, 36 spouses and uncounted children. It ran us close to 4 gold Eagles, but we had full access for one year. The Park only had 25 fulltime employees and 18 open positions with no funds to fill them.

o

"They've crossed into New Mexico."

"Where Gunny?"

"Columbus."

"Didn't Panc..."

"Yes he did, in March of 1916. They'll probably cross the border at Ciudad Juárez. That puts them in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas."

"I'm not so sure that's what she had in mind."

"What who had in mind?"

"Emma Lazarus. I can quote the entire poem from the Statue of Liberty:

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
'Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she
With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.*

*Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

"Someone ought to turn out the light. If we keep getting people at the rate we're getting them, the US is going to turn into a third world Country."

"Do you suppose we still have the most powerful military in the world with all that's happened?"

"The quality of the American fighting men and women is not diminished, nor shall it ever be all long as they're fighting for Liberty."

"Ooh rah."

"What are we doing this for?"

"What do you like, bourbon or tequila?"

"It might be a good time for the US to dust off some of those tactical nukes and use them up before they all expire."

"Nuke México?"

"I don't see why not Dan, the Air Force has a large quantity of those B61-10s. They're the most versatile weapon in our inventory and are capable of 0.3kT to 350kT. We can carry them with fighters like the F/A-18 and ...say can the F-22 or the F-35 carry nukes?"

"Gunny, they have hard points and can carry external stores, but the last time I looked on Global Security, they didn't list either plane as capable of carrying nukes. The old B-52s and the B-2 can carry nukes."

"I like that, 10,000 nukes and only 100 or so planes to carry them."

"Not counting the F/A-18s."

"Right. But the big planes don't carry the tactical nukes do they?"

"I'm sure they could be adapted," I told Gunny.